The University of Chicago

ÖSTERLING'S "ARRIVAL" AS *LANDSKAPSDIKTARE:* FROM *ÅRETS VISOR* (1907) TO *BLOMMANDE TRÄD* (1910)

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GROUP STUDIES IN THE HUMANITIES: LITERATURE

1935

By

ALRIK GUSTAFSON

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CHAPTER III

ÖSTERLING'S "ARRIVAL" AS *LANDSKAPSDIKTARE*: FROM *ÅRETS VISOR* (1907) TO *BLOMMANDE TRÄD* (1910)

> Oförmågan att friskt förnimma natur har i alla tider varit dåliga tecken, och medan vår svensk målarkonst årligen bjuder ny, monumental natursyn, står den svenska lyriken halfblind bak brillorna....
>
> En fri genius skyggar icke för de torftigaste objekt, tvärtom känner han ofta en hemlig dragning just till det glanslösa, undamskymda och försmådda, till livets allra fattigaste stilleben....
>
> Jag vill ej se mig själv, men blott de and_a.
> Det är min väg. Och den har jag att vandra.

Our examination of *Offerkransar* and *Hälsningar* in the preceding discussion has demonstrated with reasonable completeness the nature of the change in the direction of a poetic realism that characterizes Österling's creative work in the years immediately after the publication of *Preludier* in 1904. This examination has revealed that the aesthetic paradox, the fundamental conflict between life and art, the real and the ideal, so characteristic of Österling's earliest poetry has been solved, at least theoretically, by the poet and that this solution has been determined by two factors, first, the poet's own native desire for a peace and quiet that *fin de siècle* aestheticism could not provide, and secondly, a number of influences, chiefly literary, from without. In our examination of these latter contributing influences, we have been able to demonstrate that most of the specific elements

that go to make up Österling's growing sense of poetic realism may be accounted for in terms of his literary predilections during these years in the direction of contemporary Danish poetry, together with the closely related art and poetry of Skåne, and his interest in such foreign poets as Francis Jammes and William Wordsworth. It is only in his conception of "livets lag" that we have been unable to suggest a specific source. Yet this would hardly seem necessary, for it would perhaps best be explained, on the negative side, simply as a natural development in the young poet's struggle against the hyper-subjectivity of aestheticism as he had come to know it, combined, in its positive formulation, with the general emphasis upon "law" which nineteenth-century science had made so explicit especially in the worlds of biology and geology. At best the conception, as developed by Österling, is a general one, neither closely defined nor developed with any great originality or depth; and as it stands it simply provides the poet with a starting point for a general theoretical rejection of the l'art pour l'art ideal so dear to the fin de siècle aesthete.

The realism of Offerkransar and Hälsningar, it has been made sufficiently clear, is largely theoretical rather than actual. These two volumes merely announce, more or less clearly, the new poetic creed which Österling is attempting to formulate; they hardly demonstrate creatively, in any really convincing fashion, the new realism that they preach. This is to be done in Årets visor, the second volume from 1907.

Årets visor is in general characterized by a spontaneous, at points almost a rollicking vitality of tone that reveals a creative power completely freed from the moody subjectivity of Österling's earlier years. No longer is the poet turned in upon

himself, wearily meditating on the hopeless paradox between life and art, reality and dream. His eye is now turned outward, upon life itself, and in this life he discovers poetic materials which enable him to realize in his new art a rich, vital objectivity. This new objectivity takes on two distinct forms: on the surface, and largely as concerns technique and general tone, the poems in Årets visor are as fresh and warm and rich as the play of the four seasons of the year which they seek to depict; and still everywhere in these poems, as a deep undertone, runs a continuous strain of humour, a new note in Österling -- a humour warm, understanding, tenderly responsive to all of human life in its infinite variety of experience. The reflective vein, whenever present, now becomes of a piece with the rich spontaneity and deep human feeling of these poems rather than världsfrånvänd as it had been earlier.

1.

The point in Österling's development toward a poetic realism that is marked by the publication of Årets visor involved first of all the discovery of a new subject matter, and he found this in the materials of life immediately about him, the Skåne of his forefathers and of his own boyhood and youth. Österling thus becomes in Årets visor primarily a landskapsdiktare, successor of A. U. Bååth, Ola Hansson, and Vilhelm Ekelund as an interpretor of the landscape and folk of his native province. It would be a mistake to maintain that Österling had been totally unaware of the possibilities of such a subject matter in his earlier volumes. We catch fairly frequent glimpses of the poet's native province, as we have seen, in the volumes previous to Årets visor; but nowhere before have these dominated his subject matter, and even when they do occur their actual poetic validity is obscured by a

certain "literary" quality. It is hardly the real Skåne that he depicts in such poems, but rather a transformed, artificial Skåne as viewed through the distorting lens of a Continental aesthete, or a youthful sentimentalist, or a rather obvious imitator of the skånsk stämningsdiktning of Hansson and Ekelund. Theoretically he "accepts" Skåne in such volumes as Offerkransar and Hälsningar, but actually he does not "see" it, or "touch" it, or "smell" it; he is vaguely aware of its potentialities as poetic material, but he does not realize these potentialities in a sensitively rich realistic art. In Årets visor, however, he yields completely to its spell -- as a child revelling in a new and wonderful world of the senses, as a youth responding to its inner power. Life is taken for granted here, and enjoyed; it is seldom theorized on, and never brooded over. No traces of the aesthetic paradox of the Preludier poems live on in the pages of Årets visor. Here we do not find life opposed to art; life is art, in that it provides the inevitable materials of a sound art. In a word, Österling has at last thrown off completely the sophisticated, artificial aestheticism of his earlier years and becomes in Årets visor the realistic poet of his native province, Skåne.

We have seen that the causes which determined Österling's shift at this time are to be found first of all in the foreign literary influences, those of Denmark and France and England, together with similar strains in the art and poetry of Skåne. In addition to these it is very probable that the provincial poetry of nittiotalet in uppsverige, the Värmland interpretations of Gustaf Fröding and those from Dalarne of Erik Axel Karlfeldt, had their indirect significance for Österling as a landskapsdiktare. It would be misleading, however, to attempt to show any amount of direct indebtedness here. A close examination of Österling's

early verse reveals no examples of a direct "aping" of Fröding's Värmland poems. This is significant when we take into account the fact that nearly every aspiring young poet in Sweden during these years was hypnotized in one way or another by nittiotalet, particularly by the provincial poetry of Fröding. Vilhelm Ekelund, Österling's immediate predecessor as a poet of provincial Skåne, is a case in point. Critics immediately recognized the Fröding strain in his early verse.[1] Such a poem, for example, as "I pilhäcken" (in Vårbris, 1900) is simply a crude copy of Fröding's famous "Skalden Wennerbom." Nothing of this kind is to be found in Österling. His relation to the provincial poetry of the 90's is rather general than particular; he uses motifs, as did Fröding and Karlfeldt, of a local, provincial flavour, but here for the most part the similarity ends. It is possible that Frödings so-called "originaler" may have influenced some of Österling's poetry much later, for one group of poems in Jordens heder (1927) seems somewhat reminiscent of Fröding; but even here the similarity is slight, and it is known that Österling drew directly from life in this group of poems. Though Österling greatly admired both Fröding and Karlfeldt, his genius was essentially different from theirs, especially Fröding's, and therefore he was not apt to be directly indebted to them. Besides, as we have seen, he found examples of poetic realism at other points. Another factor, however, is of definite immediate importance in turning Österling's attention to his native province as a subject matter for his poetry. This is his foreign travel. Like so many Scandinavian artists and poets, the young Österling had longed to visit the Continent, particularly the south and Italy; and already in

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[1] See Bengt Lidforss' review of Melodier i skymning in his Litteraturkritik (Malmo, 1920), p. 65.

the three years immediately preceding the publication of Årets visor he had satisfied his longing on at least four separate occasions (two months in the autumn of 1904 in Berlin, both the spring of 1905 and that of 1906 in Italy, and the spring of 1907 in Paris). Though Österling did not find these months in the south of Europe disappointing, it is doubtful whether the experience has left any significant positive marks on his work. He has written, indeed, a large number of poems with Italian motifs, but they are seldom among his most happy creative efforts. One is forced to the conclusion that Italy, with its perfect climate and its rare cultural treasures, has been to Österling merely a place of occasional happy refuge rather than a necessary positive element in his poetic development. Italy had no such significance for him as it had for Goethe over a hundred years earlier. In a review of Johannes Jørgensen's Indtryck og Stemninger in 1912, Österling refers to "denna sydlandslängtan, som hos nordbon närmast är ett slags fågelfri hedendom," and these words might well be applied to his own relation to Italy and the south.[2] Italy had no basic constructive significance for him. What it did do, however, and this is important, was that it provided him with the necessary perspective to see his own country, and particularly his native Skåne, in a new and more favorable light. What had been before to him a rather cold and forbidding landscape, lacking in the rich colours of the south and leaving an impression of the commonplace and the banal, now becomes something more warm, more intimately appealing, and more richly capable of poetic treatment. Already in 1905, in the poem entitled significantly "Återseende," he has become conscious of this new appeal of

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[2] GHT (Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning), Jan. 17, 1912.

his native province --

Som en vän, av sorger prövad
och ej mött på år och dag,
hälsar slätten mig bedrövad
och vill le med tunga drag.

Plöjda marker sakta ånga,
diken spegla rymdens sken --
här jag vandrat under långa
barndomsomrar längesen.

Röster eka vid en länga,
dunklet rörs av råkors flykt,
lågt i blågrå töcken hänga
stadens ljus och blinka tryggt.

Bofast sinne möter kvällen
med ett ljus från egen dörr --
skymning över tysta ställen
enar åter nu och förr.

The same thought is echoed in "Städerna vid sundet" in 1910, except that in the later case the poet is responding to the cities of Skåne rather than the prairie landscape itself.

Skåne, occupying as it does the southernmost regions of the Scandinavian peninsula, differs markedly in the features of its landscape from central and northern Sweden. The traditional Swedish landscape, that of uppsverige in such typical provinces as Värmland, Dalarne, and Östergötland, offers to the eye a very diversified terrain, with boldly outlined hills, sometimes approaching the proportions of small mountains, composed basically of red granite formations, usually almost completely covered by a rich growth of hardy evergreen and birch; these hills rise usually in rather gradual elevations from quiet pastoral valleys, through which flow deep, heavy rivers or in which are located sombre toned lakes or chains of lakes, and on the banks and sloping hillsides of these watercourses are to be seen the rolling stretches of agricultural lands, small fields blocked off rather sharply from one another and providing rich enough harvests under concentrated circumstances of cultivation. The whole effect of

such a landscape is one of a bold, primitive diversity in natural phenomena, chastened only slightly by the civilizing activities of man. Even over such an old province as Dalarne, so long the possession of a hard-working, sober agricultural population, lies an unmistakable spell of the primitive; idyllic as the valleys in themselves may be, with their picturesque groupings of farm buildings gathered together in the ancient by (village) form along the deep watercourses of Västa- and Östradalälven, one never loses consciousness, as one traces the features of the landscape, of the surrounding hills, heavy-toned, massive, with deep, essentially primitive forests sweeping sombrely up to the horizon. Karlfeldt's poetry, which has its roots so deep in the nature and the folk life of Dalarne, constantly occupies itself with the essentially primitive features of the Dalarne landscape. I refer especially to such things as "Åsen" in Vildmarks- och kärleksvisor, "Jordanden" in Flora och Bellona, and "Stormnatt" in Fridolins visor. The poem "Vandring," in his last volume, Hösthorn (1927), perhaps most clearly draws the subtle contrast between the idyllic, cultivated agricultural valleys and the primitive reaches of the surrounding forests often crowned by desolate and rocky peaks.

Här är din väg, där spenslig björk
mot åsen byggt en ljus portik.
Vid sidan ligger tjärnen, mörk
av ljuvligt ruvande mystik.
Träd lätt på golv med timjan strött!
Det ligger bygd därnedanför.
Där blomstra byar hvitt och rödt
och jordens glädje, dit du hör.

Min väg går bort åt annan trakt.
Den dunklar in i hvalv av gran,
tills myren vidgar, allt för flackt
och hårdt belyst, sin bleka plan.
Den stiger tungt mot bergets bryn,
den sprängs isär av stenig vret,
tills krönet öppnar stort en syn
mot öde rymd och evighet.

Fröding's Värmland and Heidenstam's Östergötland (see the Tividen poems in Dikter, 1895) contain strong traces of the same poetic recognition of the primitive as a characteristic feature of two other of the uppsvensk provinces. Uppsverige is essentially primitive in its landscape features despite the thousands of years during which man has tried to bend its nature to his will. The idyllic is merely occasional, episodic, in these provinces; one catches glimpses of it in smiling valleys and quaint villages, whereas the landscape as such retains down through the centuries the rigorous lines which seem to have been its original feature.

Skåne, on the other hand, is more idyllic by comparison; in fact it is prevailingly idyllic, though there is more variation in the features of the landscape of Skåne, owing to its greater geographical extent, than in any other Swedish province. Linné's famous description of the landscape of Skåne, in his Skånska resa (1751), though it came out nearly two centuries ago, is still one of the best accounts of the outward appearance of this southern province. Even though his trained botanical eye occupied itself chiefly, in matters of detail, with the plant life of the province, he had also an eye for the larger physical features of the landscape and even for the play of atmospheric effects. He had plenty of time, during the necessarily leisurely movement of his carraige through the province, to note the variations in terrain and plant life from the northern parts of the province, with their more uneven surface and greater forest growths, to the southern counties, with their flat stretches of rich soil almost devoid of forests.

> Slätten är flack och nog låg i afseende til hafvet samt lagd af naturen uti lindriga och knapt synliga convesiteter, som dock til vidden äro ansenligare och afskilde med aflånga

smala dälder liksom i Flandern, med hvilket detta land i art och lynne har mästa gemenskap. Jorden är här sand eller lera med mylla, utan gråbärg eller tufvor.

Skoglanden äro högre mot hafvet, ligga up in uti landet, längre från stränderna, mäst norr i landet; desse äro backige, dock mindre bärgaktige, än uti de öfre provincier. Jorden består af gråberg, gråsten, alf, tufvor.[3]

He was especially fascinated, uppsvensk that he was, by the very level, or only slightly rolling, prairie-land in the southernmost extremes of the province --

Junius. 19.

RESAN ifrån Malmö åt Trelleborg.

LANDET emellan Malmö och Trelleborg var det härligaste i verlden och liknade merendels Flandern, ty det var en slätt, utan bärg, backar, stenar, floder, sjöar, trän eller buskar; det gick småningom uti helt jämna convesiteter, af hela quartens längd, som knapt kunde märkas; alt var denna tid betäckt med den härligaste säd af vinter-råg och korn samt några trädesfält för mulbete. Det var märkvärdigt at se de många kor och hästar, de många får och hvita gäss, med svin kunna föda sig här på fälten, som så litet voro gräslupna och der säd varit i fjol. Men om man skulle up i Sverige subtrahera på marken alla trän, buskar, ris, stenar, klippor, tufvor och mossa, så tror jag väl, at den skulle vara lika naken. Här och där emellan fälten voro helt små fuktige parker, som buro något gräs, och på desse voro merendels pussar, der forna tiders invånare upgrafvit torf; i desse pussar begynte några tufvor at växa och liksom at läka igen detta jordens sår, hvilka tufvor endast voro hopvuxne af et enda gräs, som kallas tufstarr Fl. 767....[4]

Linné goes on in this same passage to describe the appearance of the villages scattered along the highway, and especially minute is his examination of the separate groupings of farm buildings (gårdar), with their modestly picturesque exteriors, and the beautiful gardens and orchards attached to each property. East of Trälleborg he found the landscape even more flat --

LANDET, som vi i dag öfverreste, var med sina fält nästan horizontelt som et golv och icke som i går kullrigt; de högsta toppar af almträden syntes fjerran ifrån såsom buskar och gåfvo til känna hvarest som byarne lågo i dälderne; och inga trän märktes på andra ställen, än vid byarne. Flintklappur var strödd öfver alt.[5]

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[3] Skånska resa (Lund, 1874), p. v.

[4] Ibid., pp. 156-57.

[5] Ibid., p. 165.

To these scattered descriptive sketches of Skåne by Linné we might add some paragraphs from the pen of Hans Wåhlin, a present-day observer and native of the province. He objects strongly to the popular opinion that the Skånsk landscape is everywhere as flat as a pancake --

> ... Men det är inte så viktigt, om vi se de avlägsnaste konturerna vid horisonten mera eller mindre klart; det som vi sätta värde på är själva landskapets bredd och öppenhet. I Skåne är det långt mellan himmelskupans grundvalar, vid rymd mellan höjderna och väldiga perspektiv över sänkorna mellan dem. Allt det som ryms inom horisontens gräns ser man gärna på närmare håll, en sak i sänder. Vad man uppskattar i de stora utsikterna är själva horisontens vidd; det är känslan av oändlighet och av frihet, av att intet hindrar blicken och tanken. Från Lund ser man västerut över slätt och hav och främmande kust bortom havet; jag vet ingen vackrare och meningsfullare symbol för tankens fria och öppna synkrets.
>
> Det händer så mycket i luften, när man ser den från slätten. Molnen tåga upp på himmelen, vidunderligt stora i jämförelse med horisontens små kyrkspiror, och man ser deras skuggor förmörka fälten i ett annat härad. Regnet är där; det står som en vägg långt borta framför ett stycke av det avlägsnaste landskapet. Det driver hitåt och skymmer allt närmare gårdar och dungar; nu löser väggen upp sig till en fin, grå slöja, tunnare och tunnare, ju närmare den kommer, och när molntäcket skummer solen över oss och trädens blad vina till för den kyliga vindilen, ligger det tunna grå regnfloret redan framför kyrktornet i nästa by. Men om solen bryter genom molnen, innan regnet slutar mot kvällen, kan man få se en regnbåge med många mil mellan brofästena spänna sitt valv mot österhimlens gränslösa kupa. Den springer inte från grannens tak till de närmaste skogstopparna; den kan stå med ena foten på Vångaberget och den andra långt till havs utanför Åhus.
>
> Liksom i högfjället blir rymden oändligt stor, människorna och deras händers verk mycket små. Och det gör godt att se världen på det sättet.
>
> Om marken vore slät som ett golv, skulle de närmaste pilvallarna skymma hela världen bortom dem. Men slättens långa stigningar och breda sänkor ge landskapet rytmen av en långsam böljegång; från kam till kam ser man mycket långt, och om man också bor i en sänka på slätten eller under sluttningen till en ås, ser man alltid åt något håll det avlägsna fjärran, där man tycker sig se himmelskupans rand stå på jordens yttersta gräns. Skåne är i verkligheten ett ganska starkt kuperat landskap. I Uppland når ingen punkt hundra meters höjd över havet; av Skånes yta ligger mer än en fjärdedel ovanför denna nivå. Den saken hänger inte ihop så, att de högsta delarna av Skånes mark ligga uppe vid smålandsgränsen och att landet lutar någorlunda jämnt därifrån söderut, utan höjdsträckningarna ligga spridda över hela landskapet....[6]

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[6] Boken om Skåne (Stockholm, 1930), pp. 11-13.

With Linné this present-day writer takes account of the variation in landscape features that is characteristic of Skåne, and with Linné he calls attention to the gently rolling terrain ("rytmen av en långsam böljegång") as peculiarly typical of most of the countryside; but he goes a bit farther in his analysis by pointing out the feeling of breadth and distance that sweeps over the observer as he contrasts this landscape with that of uppsverige, where, except in the fjeld country of the far north, one feels more the sensation of sharply demarked limits to the horizon. Wåhlin is doubtless right in his generalization, though the point might easily be overstated. Certain it is that the Skånsk landscape, in its breadth and openness, is idyllic as opposed to primitive. Its terrain is gently rolling, seldom, if ever, precipitate; and intensely cultivated as its rich soil has been for thousands of years, it presents to the eye a scene of rare, almost pastoral loveliness. It is the Scandinavian province where the realistic idyll in nature poetry must inevitably arise; and the idyll in this case seems in no wise artificial.

Österling's relation to this landscape has been intimate and profound from the earliest years of his childhood. His ancestry can be traced far back into Skånsk peasant stock. His paternal grandfather was a native of the county of Vemmenhög, bordering directly on the Baltic at the southernmost point of Skåne; and his mother traces her ancestry into Blekinge, the southwestern Swedish province just north of Skåne. His grandfather's home village was Hemmesdynge, just a few miles inland, but early in his life he moved to the neighborhood of Östratorp, a little fishing village directly to the south of Hemmesdynge on the shores of the Baltic. Both villages are thoroughly typical Skånska byar, which have retained even to the present day much

of their original character. It was at Östratorp that the father of Anders, Hans Österling, was born. The father of the poet did not, however, long follow the occupation of his forefathers, although he maintained throughout life the strongest of feelings for his peasant ancestry. He soon drifted into school teaching, but because of his rather advanced views he did not seem to fit well in the profession, and ultimately he became a publisher on a small scale and an editor of provincial newspapers, first in Hälsingborg, where Anders was born, and later in Malmö, the capital city of Skåne.[7] As a boy thus Anders grew up in the atmosphere of small provincial cities, though he was constantly aware of the immediately surrounding rural landscape; and most of his summers he spent on the farms of relatives in the neighborhood of his paternal grandfather's Östratorp. In nearly all of the volumes from Årets visor on we find the strongest traces of the influence that this immediate contact with rural nature as a boy in the south of Skåne had left upon him. And it is fairly certain that it was his father who first drew his enthusiasms in this direction, though Österling is unusually reticent on the point. Only once in his poetry, so far as I can recall, does he admit directly this indebtedness to his father; this is in the first group of poems, all with motifs immediately drawn from southern Skåne, in Jordens heder (1927). This group was composed, the poet admitted to me, "som en liten minneskrans för min faders grav"; and the poem "Till avsked," which brings the group to a

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[7]It might be recorded as something more than a literary curiosity that Hans Österling was the first Swedish publisher of such famous works as Ola Hansson's Sensitiva amorosa and Strindberg's Fadren and Kamraterna. These he published when none of the larger Swedish publishing houses would have anything to do with them.

close, makes the identification directly.

Du borde helst i samma mull,
som är av dina fäder full,
och njuta samma ro, som än
beskäres trötta byamän.

Väl rycktes du från deras rot
till stadsbolivets sorl och sot,
men du behöll som en av dem
till sista stund ditt första hem.

De gingo bakom häst och plog.
Ej samma fält du övertog.
Din fåra drogs av ödets nyck
i tidningsspaltens svarta tryck.

Du såg i tidens bråda tjänst
den fjärran torvan solbeglänst,
du lyddes genom pressens dån
till barndomslärkan hemifrån.

Vad du har känt i långa år
din son med samma blod förstår --
jag band en sångens krans åt det,
som var vår helg och hemlighet.

Ditt huvud nu, med rätta trött,
av mödans plöjda fåror strött,
bär samma lugn i bleka drag
som bygden själv en vinterdag.

Du skulle färdas än en gång
vid klockans kända sockensång
och läggas enligt skick och tur
bland åbofolk vid kalkad mur.

Men vind från slätten, frisk och hård,
når in till stadens kyrkogård,
och kanske måsen, där den flög,
bar bud till dig från Vemmenhög.

Jordens heder is filled with memories from the poet's childhood days in the countryside of Skåne. The opening stanzas of "Hemmanet," for example, represent a magnificent effort to recatch the spirit of these boyhood days, carefree, indeed, yet full of a vague sense of the larger significance of the experience, though the poem is somewhat marred by a too obvious moralizing strain in the closing stanza. In "Jag vet en liten lund" the poet, in a gently tender reminiscent tone, contrasts his own later life of conflict and struggle in a larger, less idyllic world with

the simple pleasures and deep hidden meanings of a life close to nature in his native province --

I Vemmenhög därhemma
jag vet en liten lund,
som grönskar mitt i åkern
med trädens slutna rund.

Och den är full av blommor,
och hur jag kom och for,
de spira, ständigt nya
i samma gamla flor.

Med blåa, milda ögon
de se på mig så kärt:
Vad har du bort i världen
väl bättre känt och lärt?

Jag svarar: det var intet.
Ett liv i damm och rök.
Förgätmigejer, glittren,
och spela, barndomsgök!

Jag får hos er ej leva,
blott stundom hälsa på,
förfriskad av er vink om
att älska och förstå.

Anders Österling, the poet and critic, had in this sense gone the same way as his father before him, the way of the city, of journalism and authorship; but he too had retained the feeling of kinship with his peasant ancestry and the natural landscape of Skåne. The importance of Österling's early boyhood memories of Skåne cannot be overemphasized when one is searching for the determining influences upon his nature poetry. Everywhere in his verse we come upon delicate suggestions of it -- in the choice of a word, the turn of a phrase, the boyish spontaneity of an image; and sometimes, as in the poems cited above, the strain is much more clearly marked, become the sole raison d'être of the artist's conception. Österling himself has stressed the deep significance of memory in one's feeling specifically for landscape in an interesting paragraph of an essay entitled "Lommabukten." Lommabukten, the name given to the sweep of bay north of Malmö in Öresund, is a stretch of waterfront along which the

poet had often wandered during his free-time as a child and youth.

> Det är också för svanornas skull jag särskildt fäst mitt hjärta vid Lommabukten. En del europeiskt berömda stränder har jag sett, och jag skall gärna medge, att på Lidos festliga plage i aromatisk luft och Adriatersol är det ljuft att lustvandra. Man finner de underbaraste musslor i dess sand. Vid Lommabukten har jag i stället funnit drömmar, bleka visserligen som marfiolen och strandastern därute vid de stilla pölarna, men människan är nu sådan, att hon hyser en viss tillgifvenhet för de landskap, som gömma hennes små minnen på godt och ondt -- de tysta och alltid resonliga vittnena till hennes ensamma tankar. För mig är Lommabukten säreget vacker. Denna Öresundsgolf, som visst icke speglar några rosiga scenerier, har i sin färgskala af brunt, grått och hvitt, blott en diskret skönhet, som intager alldeles oemotståndligt. Och hvarje gång jag vänder hem från en resa och vid relingen ser Lommabukten från hafssidan, så glider dess låga välkända linje med de strödda hvita gårdarna in i mitt medvetande som stråken öfver strängen, och det är hemmets visa som åter börjar spela.[8]

One is reminded, in reading such a passage, of a like stress that Wordsworth placed upon the psychology of memory in the processes of poetic creation when he reasons out the basis of his definition of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility."

In addition to this immediate contact with the landscape of Skåne that came to Österling in his boyhood and early youth, it would be well to call attention again at this point to the general importance that Skånsk art and poetry had for him. Skånsk literary influences, as we have seen, so far as they are readily demonstrable, come largely through the stämningsdiktning of Ola Hansson and Vilhelm Ekelund and affect largely such early volumes as Preludier, Offerkransar, and Hälsningar. Such stämningsdiktning, however, became of decreasing importance to Österling as the years went by; they served in general merely to turn the young Österling's eyes toward his native province as materials for poetry, and when their influence was more particular, as in

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[8] Människor och landskap, p. 104.

Österling's very earliest years, it was only a passing one. The foreign critic, at least, has the impression that Österling's poetry dealing with Skåne is unusually free from the poetic tradition of his native province, developing for the most part rather independent of it, though that there is some indebtedness cannot be denied even with regard to Österling's later poetry. Though it would be almost impossible of demonstration, my feeling is that if any Skånsk poet was of real significance to Österling down through the years it was A. U. Bååth, whose realistic plasticity of imagery and lively livskänsla might easily have shown the way in certain phases of Österling's poetic realism. In the very year of the publication of Årets visor (1910) Österling pens a very enthusiastic review of an edition of Bååth's Dikter i urval.

> Det är vårdoft i dessa 80-tals-daterade vers. Doft af städernas vår, när byggena skjuta i höjden och asfalten rullas på nya gator och aprilstormen rifver i flyttningslassen, en nybyggarstämning full af arbetsglädje och framtidsmod! Och bygdens vårdoft, först och främst den, rykande mylla, safve i träden, skrik af vipor öfver sanka ängar, frodighet, lifsalstring, kraftomsättning!...[9]

It is the first section in this collection of Bååth's verse -- a section dedicated to Skånsk hembygdsdiktning -- that Österling finds of greatest significance --

> Det lider intet tvifvel, att den första af dessa fyra grupper också är den dominerande. Här klingar alltså den den klassiska upptakten till all den mångstämmiga musik, som provinsen sedan bestått sig. Och det är en upptakt som duger! Här är det kärfva handlaget, som blev hans särmärke, och denna rytmik, som kännetecknas af pilträdets egen knotigt uttrycksfulla struktur. Segt, solidt knyter sig denna pilträdsrytmik om färgklara perspektiv öfver slätt och sund, oförglömliga bygdestycken af must och solsken, gårdsknutar och byadammar och gammaldags hagar. Öfverallt ville man dröja bland dessa kära och välbekanta ting....[10]

These lines seem almost as exactly descriptive of Österling's

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[9] GHT., June 5, 1910. [10] Ibid.

own Årets visor as they do of the poetry of Bååth.

The first thing that one becomes aware of in the poems of Årets visor, after having steeped onesself to the point of satiation in the technical virtuousities, nearly always brilliant, though uneven, and sometimes cheap, of Österling's earlier volumes, is a prevailing simplicity of manner that captivates the modern ear as it did Österling's contemporaries. Here, it is clear, the poet has finally worked his way out of the numerous snares that beset the mere virtuouso in verse forms and has discovered a poetic vein that he can maintain with balance and consistency. The verse form here is throughout a fourteen line stanza of iambic pentameters rhyming alternately or in couplets. Österling handles this rather severe pattern, however, with refreshing variations without ever violating the basic structure, using run-on lines wherever he deems it necessary; and his taste is almost invariably sure and unerring. He manages to mould his verse form to fit a great variety of moods. The group of stanzas on "Sommaren" might be taken to illustrate our point. In the opening stanza of this section, for example, he provides an entrancingly light lilting movement --

> De vilda rosorna bevinga bergen
> med vita fjärilar och gröna snärjen,
> och denna strandens dans av blommor bär
> i dans min fot! Ty det är sommar här
> och sommar överallt, varhelst det ryker
> en näve jord i sol -- och som jag dyker
> i sommaren, blir all dess allmakt min: --
> och så berusad av ett junivin,
> vars skum är glädje, och vars doft är hälsa,
> vill jag med hjälp av lätta andar frälsa
> den tyngste! -- Själva trädgårdarna stå
> nyfiket hängande mot buktens blå,
> där röster klinga, ekande otaliga,
> från nakna människor, som bada saliga.

But in the very next stanza the same pattern is used to suggest a heavy, late summer somnolence, weighted with a wealth of solid

blocks of imagery suggestive of a Keats in "To autumn."

> Kastanjeträden stå med överfull
> och rödvit blom, välsignat sommarrunda,
> och för den mycknа gröna skuggans skull
> vill varje lätting blint och tanklöst blunda.
> En sommarsaga är vår gård i dag,
> vaktpojkens fötter lerigt bruna glittra
> på dammens gräsvall, och i fett behag
> de vita gässen vattenbilden splittra.
> Där klövern prunkar i sitt rödblå flor,
> står vattensurran spräckt och övergiven,
> och ägovidden är av granna kor
> i tuggande och tunga led beskriven.
> Man domnar bort. Det rodnar utanför.
> Snart är det bara syrsorna man hör.

And in the last stanza of "Sommaren" a softly warm melody fuses delicately with an only slightly diffuse imagery to offer a meditative evening strain of intimate, peaceful beauty --

> Vad det är skönt, när arbetsdagen dör --
> saktmodigt solnedgångens spel förströr
> den man vars öga, nyss från dammet tvaget
> vidöppet och vidunderligt betaget
> i himlens öga vilar en sekund!
> Nu löser skuggan sig med solens blund
> som hjärtedagg -- och dygnets hela myller
> av ton och tystnad, verk och vila fyller
> med sammanträngd berusning denna syn.
> Välsignad den, som lärt sig se i skyn
> sin själs förklaringar: -- för honom döden
> blir mera blid, ty branden av hans öden
> har bort i livets långa somrar smält
> till glorrikt aftonljus i gyllne fält.

Österling's greatest technical triumphs in <u>Årets visor</u>, however, are probably to be found in such stanzas as those beginning, "En naken huldra gick här nyss förbi" ("Våren, VII") and "Det har jag drömt i fläderns egen skugga --" ("Sommaren, IV"). The former of these, as Böök has pointed out, is lyric poetry of the very highest rank and certainly among the best things that Österling has ever written.

> En naken huldra gick här nyss förbi,
> och ännu viskar vägens pil därom,
> hon bar ej slånens blommor i sin famn,
> och ändå blommar slånen, där hon kom,
> hon nämnde ingen jordfödd älsklings namn,
> och ändå ekar allt av het musik.

Men dessa trolskt förvuxna vita snår
och dessa pilvedsflöjters hedna skrik
blott den förstår, som under molnen går
och tigger himlens vindar om besked
var natt, när mossens isar gå itu,
om varför bröstet aldrig kan få fred
av vårlig törst till blom och sång ännu. --
En naken huldra gick här nyss förbi.

The central conception of the poem is intensely imaginative, touched by a suggestion of something that resembles symbolism; and the floating, almost evanescent imagery, modern enough in its tone and yet mysteriously suggestive in its ancient Scandinavian connotations, is accompanied by a flexibility of phrase and an ease of metrical structure which comes to a lyric poet, even a great lyric poet, only occasionally in a life-time.

Here is a musical poem if Österling has ever written one; its phrases are perfectly tuned to its subject, yielding as softly to the demands of theme and imagery as did the wild grasses to the graceful ankles of the wood-nymph herself. And yet how different is the musical effect here attained to similar poems in Preludier! In his earlier volume Österling followed the Continental symbolists, who too often sought musical combinations as almost the sole raison d'être of the poetic art. The two opening poems of Preludier, "Hymnen" and "Harmoni i vitt," are largely in this manner. Both are primarily, almost exclusively, musical in their appeal; their imagery is quite secondary to this musical appeal, and on the whole they merely produce an effect of easy, graceful artificiality. Österling, it must be admitted, has travelled a long way in his portrayal of the feminine between the artificially conceived "blonda ungmör" and "vita dansande" of "Harmoni i vitt" and the intensely imagined "naken huldra" of Årets visor. Both of these poems are marked, indeed, by simplicity of utterance, though the latter is the more simple of the

two, for it is more tangible, more firm in its outlines, has something more of the plastic in its total conception.

Relatively firm in its outlines, however, as this poem is when compared with similar things in Preludier, it is elsewhere in Årets visor that Österling's new plasticity, his fresh concreteness of imagery is most clearly marked. It is in Årets visor, indeed, that our Swedish poet ultimately realizes a new objectivity in his poetic art that such volumes as Offerkransar and Hälsningar only faintly foreshadowed. What had been largely theoretical in these earlier volumes becomes actual in Årets visor. The poet has finally placed his feet firmly on the earth and taken his place among the simple commonplaces of everyday life. This new objectivity identifies itself with the poetic technique and the point of view in this new volume. In the matter of poetic technique, simultaneously with the new developments in the direction of a greater simplicity of verse form that we have noted above, this new objectivity finds expression chiefly in a poetic yielding to the concrete realities of the actual world as opposed to the subjective dream-worlds of the poet's earlier volumes. The poet's immediate physical sensations are given free reign in Årets visor; outward existence is seen and touched and heard with a fresh and vivid intimacy, seldom troubled, and never overwhelmed, by subjective considerations. The imagery of these poems is, as a consequence, solidly concrete, colorful, and full of the overpowering sensations of healthy and sensitive youth. Already in the opening stanza of "Våren," the first section of Årets visor, one comes across vivid splashes of color and a solidity of outline seldom approached in Österling's earlier p etry --

Vad sjunger så förfriskande som hoppet

om resor, blånande bak fyr och pir,
fast vita isar spärra hamninloppet
och hela vidden är ett silverskir
av miljoner blanka flak att skönja!
Skyns dans av måsar blir ett äventyr,
och skarp och färsk en vårlig lukt av mönja
från röda ångbåtsskrov i solen pyr.
Jag ser den isbemängda sörjan glida
omärkligt sakta i en väldig ström,
flak efter flak, mot hamnen från det vida,
och tror mig plötsligt i en lycklig dröm
se vinterdygnens tröga flykt för våren
med lump och sopor, smuts och blod i spåren.

The word choice here is one that grows immediately out of a realistic environment, not one reminiscent of an artificial literary vogue or tradition. Instead of the weak insipidities of phrasing so often characteristic of his earlier poems, Österling here indulges in broad, solid, concretely image-bearing words that seem to flow directly out of his own native Skånsk temperament --

... en vårlig lukt av mönja
från röda ångbåtsskrov i solen pyr.

And the cataloguing realism of imagery in the last line --

se vinterdygnens tröga flykt för våren
med lump och sopor, smuts och blod i spåren.

This is a new note in Österling, and it is thoroughly characteristic of most of the poems in Årets visor. The opening stanza of "Hösten" is weighty with the harvest imagery of the south, while the second stanza of "Sommaren," which we have quoted earlier ("Kastanjeträden stå..."), is heavy with the sensation of nature's plentiful growth under midsummer suns. But the thing in which realism of detail is most extreme, and is combined most happily with the youthful vigor of tone characteristic of most of the poems in Årets visor, is the stanza beginning, "April, kompan på årets frusna stig!" ("Våren, V").

April, kompan på årets frusna stig!
I dag är dagen full av glada krig,
och blodet stegrar sig i övermod
och dansar bort, bort, bort på luftens flod.
Gatsoparvindars barska tjänstenit

har fejat förstadsesplanaden vit,
och gröna kransar kråma sig i sol
på smäckra byggens resta hustakstol.
Affischerna -- ett blårött raseri --
från sina plank upphäva skri på skri,
som hejda blicken på dess bråda fart.
Allt är förnyelse, bestyr och start,
allt är rymt upp, förflyttat och förbytt --
ty nu vill livet sätta bo på nytt.

There is something of the roguish humour of Sophus Claussen in these rapidly moving lines with their almost startling vividness of imagery. Österling has never written anything more uppsluppen than this.

Quite often (as in "Sommaren, VI," "Hösten, V, VI, and VII," and "Vintern, VII and VIII") this realism of detail is used largely as a background for the treatment of human figures and thus combines with the warm flow of sympathetic humour that is everywhere characteristic of the poems in Årets visor. We shall wait with an analysis of these stanzas until later, however, when we shall have occasion to examine in some detail the point of view that prevails in this volume.

It would be misleading to imply from our discussion above that the effectiveness of all of the stanzas in Årets visor is owing to a concrete, purely objective immediacy of appeal. Certainly the group of poems to which we have just referred are more than this; and over most of the poems in Årets visor, in fact, there is a certain youthful buoyancy of tone which clearly reveals that Österling's new realism is not the mere photography of naturalism. Österling's boyish preoccupation with the immediate commonplaces of life in Årets visor did not preclude the landscape poem with the far-flung horizon and the sky beyond, which he had critically defended so vigorously on occasion, as we have seen, nor did it rule out completely stämningsdikten in the quasi-philosophical manner. More than mere traces of both

of these are to be found in Årets visor. These features of his poetry, however, were no longer permitted to dominate; they were now subtly combined with Österling's new realism of technique to form a kind of idyllic realism, concrete and objective in its manner, yet never merely physical nor merely commonplace. No longer does he indulge in pure dream-visions; we always sense the earth at our feet, if we do not actually feel it, and always at least the horizon is present.

It is clear from Österling's critical pronouncements during these years upon the desirability of a wide perspective ("vida perspektiv") in poetry that what he means by the phrase is both a wider, freer, more open horizon in matters of poetic imagery and a deepening sense of the mystery of existence in the point of view of the poet. Both of these he found in Kai Hoffmann, his Danish contemporary, and it is therefore that his enthusiasm for Hoffmann is so unstinted; but in too much of the poetry of his day, particularly that of Skåne, where the landscape itself so directly invited to "vida perspektiv," Österling failed to find it, at least in what seemed to be the desirable proportions. In Årets visor Österling himself finally realized his ideal.

Unlike in his earlier poetry Österling never permits the horizon or the skies to dominate completely any of the pieces in Årets visor. Always the earth, and usually an immediately concrete scene or situation, is central in each poem; and yet one is quite often made directly conscious of the horizon and the skies by a skillfully introduced phrase or line, an image or a symbol. In the first stanza of "Våren" one finds the element of freedom and openness, especially in some of the opening lines ("och hela vidden är ett silverskir"). The ninth piece in "Våren" commences in the same manner --

Nu synas stråk av bleka malvor dragna
från väderstreck till väderstreck i skyn,
och alla åar spegla milt betagna
i blomlöst armod dessa blommors syn.

Similarly the poet's escape from the oppressive closeness of the winter season is made in terms of springtime's "luftblå bris" in the closing line of "Våren, III." It is, however, in "Våren, IV" and in "Sommaren, III" that the sensation of "bredd och öppenhet" is most adequately attained. The first of these has as its background the sea, more specifically Östersjön off the southwest coast of Skåne --

Jag tackar ofta Östersjön för sunden,
som vattras blå av evigt söndagsljus,
ty alltid blir det söndag på sekunden,
när jag vid hjulhusdån och relingsus
ser samma vita härlighet av måsar
gå som ett långt och kungligt tärningskast
bort över speglarna, där Gefion flåsar
med min oändligt lätta själ som last; --
och det kan hända efter våta nätter
på Öresund, att våren slår sig ned,
brevduvan lik, som flämtande sig sätter
i tacklingen och ber få följa med
och efter mödosam och väglös flykt
i var mans hand sig vilar hjälplöst tryggt.

Delicately fanciful is the central conception of this piece, and not without a touch of roguish humour that reminds one of Danish poetry. By way of contrast is "Sommaren, III" -- the scene is the prairieland of Skåne at night, the tone one of gentle mystery.

De vita husen sova gott om natten,
och deras skuggor gå på ullna sockor,
men längs den dunkla byadammens vatten
där ringa grodorna som sjunkna klockor.
De gamla lindarna vid skolan nynna,
likt barn, som rabbla läxor än i blunden,
men ut i lärarens rabatter mynna
de vita floderna i midnattsstunden.
Som under snö stå binas kupor tysta --
och ömt som planens bruna trädgårdskupa
mitt hjärta speglar alla månskenskyssta
små liv i natten, underfundigt djupa
och svävande i dofterna som öar
bort i det blå, där sommarmånen snöar.

The earth and sky seem here to float together, neither clearly distinguishable from the other, in the vaguely soft nuances of the summer moon, giving to the reader, especially in the closing lines, a curious feeling of the essential oneness of terrestrial phenomena and the larger worlds beyond. This is stämningskonst in the best tradition of his Skånsk contemporaries, Ola Hansson and Vilhelm Ekelund.

Far more significant, however, in what it promises for the future, is the little group of poems in Årets visor which gains that "vida perspektiv" in the profounder sense of an interest in humanity and the fundamental relations of man to nature. Most of them occur in "Sommaren" (more specifically, V, VIII, IX, and XII), though one of the most interesting is "Hösten, VIII." As we shall have occasion to examine these in detail later, the mere citation of them must suffice here.

The tone of Årets visor, in contrast both to the aesthetic pessimism of Preludier and the rather timid and largely theoretical realism of Offerkransar and Hälsningar, is overwhelmingly positive, at times finding expression with a rollicking boyish abandon that reminds of Sophus Claussen, and nearly always richly spontaneous, fresh, alive with the fullness of youth. Only occasionally does the reflective vein creep in, and even when it does it is neither sombre in its coloring nor sinister in its implications. Årets visor is preeminently a volume of life and youth.

This positive tone implies a new point of view and necessitates a new subject matter. The new subject matter embraces all the variety of life immediately about the poet in his own province, Skåne; the new point of view finds expression primarily in a rich, sympathetic humour. It was through his preoccupation with Danish poetry during these formative years, as we have seen,

that Österling first becomes aware of the possibilities of humour as a point of view in poetic materials. Certain of Österling's own early excesses in this vein, clearly present in some of the cruder efforts at spontaneity in Årets visor (see "Sommaren, I" et al), do but witness to the fact that he had not as yet found himself in the new manner. To keep humour within proper bounds in lyric poetry is an exceedingly difficult art, requiring the constant attention of the most delicate and cultivated of tastes; it is no wonder, then, that the young Österling, coming directly out of the stilted pose of his fin de siècle aestheticism, was not able lyrically to adjust himself immediately to this new point of view. The surprising thing is that the humour in Årets visor has as genuine a ring as it undeniably does (see such things as "Våren, V," "Sommaren, VI, VII, and X"). This can be explained only when we realize that a strain of humour is native to Österling's own temperament. The Danish influence at this point acted only as an impetus, perhaps largely negative, in destroying the unnatural alliances that the young Österling had established with certain prevailing Continental artificialities; this influence suggested the possibilities, rather than defined the manner, of the humour that Österling was to develop. In Årets visor this humour, now for the first time becoming fully conscious of itself, and still unformed and immature, naturally takes on a great variety of forms, not always consistent with one another, ranging from crudely tasteless effusions, through high-spirited things in a more acceptable manner, to warmly spontaneous sympathies with the varied fortunes of "the human lot." Everywhere in these poems, it must be stressed, this humour is basically human; even when Österling's humour is crude and tasteless it is not unfeeling and artificial. Its fault, if this is

a fault, lies largely in a too insistent effusiveness, as of an early springtime bursting with unexpected fullness after a long and heavy northern winter.

The general significance of this discovery of a vein of humour, no matter what specific form it may have taken in Årets visor, can hardly be overstated. The direction which Österling's youthful creative efforts had taken in Preludier, a direction from which they had hardly been completely freed in Offerkransar and Hälsningar, would have led doubtless to an even more monumental emptiness than did the same strain in Stefan George. Österling's discovery of humour fortunately restored the balance before too much damage had been done; it led him out of the morass of a moody subjectivism back into the real, objective world outside himself, first, to the world of nature in his home province, and secondly, to man himself in this environment. It shall be our task now to examine in some detail his treatment of this new subject matter.

Three aspects of Österling's subject matter in Årets visor would seem to demand especial attention: first, his treatment of the landscape in general; secondly, his handling of hembygden, those immediate features of the landscape that have particularly to do with the peasant, his life and his culture; and thirdly, his general interest in man as such, the broad humanitarian concerns of the poet. Each of these tends to merge with the others in Österling's treatment, it is true, but for the purposes of our analysis it would seem best to keep them relatively distinct, though without neglecting their specific interrelations wherever it might be deemed necessary.

One is immediately struck by the fact that in Österling's treatment of landscape in this volume there are no traces of the

artificial dream-landscapes of his earlier verse. Gone completely also is the overdone, exotic coloring of his earlier landscapes. His sole desire now seems to be to depict the Skånsk prairie as he sees it, a landscape that apparently needed no "additions" from the poet's pen.[11] Though Österling's pure landscape scenes in Årets visor have evaded the most precarious pitfalls of the romantic dream world and the equally romantic leanings toward the exotic, they do, on the whole, have a prevailingly idyllic tone. The effect of "bredd och öppenhet" is everywhere present, especially, as we might expect, in "Våren" and "Sommaren." Our poet gains this effect largely by emphasizing such typically Skånsk natural phenomena as a brilliant sun-filled sky hovering lazily over a broad spreading prairie (see especially "Våren, IX") or a wide expanse of open sea flashing intensely off a low, wide sweep of coastline ("Våren, IV" and "Sommaren, I").[12] Never does he seem to tire of such motifs. The use of the sky in Österling's landscape poetry inevitably suggests the deep blues of sky and water in Francis Jammes, whom, as we have seen, the Swedish poet admired greatly during these years. It is such a

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[11]Some years later, in reviewing his old friend Ernst Norlind's novel, Johan Fredrik Hell, in GHT., nr. 154, 1913, Österling clearly reveals his distaste of those who would give an exotic coloring to their treatment of the landscape of Skåne. "Man kunde invända," he writes, "att färgen på sina ställen är uppdriven på ett sätt, som närmar sig det exotiska, skildringen av mosslandskapet exempelvis med dess soliga under och härligheter. Man tänker snarare på Mexico än på Skåne"!

[12]It might be recorded, incidentally, that "Sommaren, I" has several touches in it that remind very stronly of Wordsworth's "Daffodils," especially its general tone of cheerful gaiety. The opening lines, containing the image of the dance of flowers along a shore-line,

och denna strandens dans av blommor bär
i dans min fot!...

seem to be almost a direct echo of a similar image, evoking a similar mood, in "Daffodils."

sky that gave to his interpretations of the Skånsk prairie country-side much of their idyllic tone. Even a rain-filled sky, however, will serve the idyllic purposes of the poet. One of his most typical idyllic landscape scenes is to be found in "Våren, VIII" --

> Regn i april -- fall fint -- regn i april
> och bär min viskning över skymningsjorden,
> att de, som lyssna, kunna tyda orden
> ur vattensuset över slättens mil!
> De varma stänken över gräsen vandra
> med många snabba leenden av nåd
> för alla arma liv, som ej haft råd
> att glädja sig åt solen själv som andra.
> Ett bad så fruktbart natten nu berett,
> och i dess pärlgrå vattenljus skall dagen,
> som sänkt sig sölad, uppstå morgontvagen
> med ögat blekt av undren som det sett.
> Du regn, jag ber ej för mig själv allena:
> tvag alla nakna mänskohjärtan rena!

Here is the usual sweep and breadth of Skånsk prairieland, but now it is bathed in the soft fall of an April rain, soothing the poet's own mood into an idyllic gentleness that ultimately broadens out into a general spirit of benevolence "för alla arma liv."

Much more realistic does Österling become in those poems in Årets visor in which he brings man and the more immediate commonplace phenomena of life into the forefront of his picture. In these pieces he identifies himself, as we have seen, with that great body of hembygdsdiktning (the poetry of the province, its folk and their customs) which nittiotalet had so successfully introduced into Swedish literature. Österling's hembygdsdiktning, however, is in no wise a mere aping of Fröding and Karlfeldt; it maintains always a certain flavour of its own -- less spontaneous than Fröding and perhaps less historically rooted than Karlfeldt, but just as genuine as either in its way. In the main it distinguishes itself from Fröding and Karlfeldt in the sense that Skåne itself differs from the uppsvensk provinces of Värmland and Dal-

arne. It is less primitive in its passions than much of Fröding (Österling has never written anything to be compared to such a thing as "Jägar Malms hustru") and less rugged in its technique than Karlfeldt; it is on the whole more gentle in its realism and more fanciful in its humour than either of Österling's great predecessors. Österling's hembygdsdiktning is of a piece with Skånsk racial temperament: solid in its enjoyment of the physical sensations of life, dignified, even in its humour, conservative almost to the point of a passive objectivity, and usually quite at peace with existence.

It is particularly in the sections "Sommaren" and "Hösten" that Österling allows his creative imagination to play with an intimate affection over the folk of his province, their life and their customs. His general method is to offer little sketches of various characteristic phases of this life. In "Sommaren, II" we have a picture, loaded with a heavy weight of imagery, of a typical Skånsk gård (enclosed farmyard) in midsummer, while in the piece that immediately follows we find a gently phrased nocturne descriptive of a southern Swedish village at midnight; in "Sommaren, V" we are permitted to catch a glimpse of one of the poet's reminiscences from childhood -- three children wandering across the prairie after nightfall and all three mysteriously conscious of their oneness with the prairie and the night skies. The sixth and seventh stanzas in this same section provide interiors, largely in the humourous vein, the former a sketch of the gård of a retired sea captain's home, so typical of the picturesque little fishing villages sprawled along the southern coast, and the latter a roguish bit of poetic fancy in which the various articles of furniture within a typical Skånsk farm home on a sleepy summer day are made to take on personal qualities.

The ancient burial mounds of Skåne (dösen) are not allowed to pass without yielding their poetic service ("Sommaren, VIII"), nor are the cozy, hospitable interiors of the skånska gårdar, made more intimately inviting by the blustery autumn season without ("Hösten, IV, V, and VI"); and the poet finds a certain bracing, though paradoxical, joy even in the late autumn landscape of

sin bygd
i dött och svart och fruset enahanda. ("Hösten, VII")

One's sum total impression of these stanzas dealing with the poet's hembygd is that Österling is suggestive rather than exhaustive; he gives us characteristic motifs from his home province, the choice of the motif in any given case being determined simply by the spontaneous vagaries of the poet's mind. This gives to the poems in Årets visor a free sweep of movement, an airy individualism, a freshness of touch that Österling never equals in any other volume.

I have said that Österling's prevailing method in Årets visor is the sketch; this determines both the qualities and the limitations of the individual poems. There is little effort in these sketches to be deeply interpretative of the life that the poet seeks to depict, and a broad philosophical approach to his materials is absent. On the other hand, this group of poems in Årets visor has two very distinct qualities: first, they reproduce with an intimate objective accuracy many of the simple, concrete commonplaces of folk life in the south of Sweden, and secondly, they do this with a certain freshness and buoyancy, a certain rich, warm humour that gives to these commonplace phenomena an undeniable appeal even to one who is not a native of Skåne.

The stanzas in which Österling perhaps most adequately captures the physical features of skånska hembygden in this volume are "Sommaren, II" and the series of three interiors beginning with "Hösten, III." Seldom, if ever, in poetry or art have the characteristic details of a Skånsk gård in the heavy heat of a late afternoon in summer on the prairie been captured with the accuracy and concentration that the following stanza realizes:

> Kastanjeträden stå med överfull
> och rödvit blom, välsignat sommarrunda,
> och för den myckna gröna skuggans skull
> vill varje lätting blint och tanklöst blunda.
> En sommarsaga är vår gård i dag,
> vaktpojkens fötter lerigt bruna glittra
> på dammens gräsvall, och i fett behag
> de vita gässen vattenbilden splittra.
> Där klövern prunkar i sitt rödblå flor,
> står vattensurran spräckt och övergiven,
> och ägovidden är av granna kor
> i tuggande och tunga led beskriven.
> Man domnar bort. Det rodnar utanför.
> Snart är det bara syrsorna man hör.

This is skånska hembygden as distinguished from all the uppsvensk provinces: the solid, low-built square of the gård picturesquely imbedded in the heavy foliage of a characteristic chestnut grove, with the idle goatherd seated along the grassy shore of the little geese-pond and the geese "i fett behag" cutting the surface of the water in the foreground, whilst in the immediate background the cattle munch lazily and the fields of blooming clover stretch away toward the horizon. Unusual for Skånsk poetry in general, as well as for Österling's in particular, are the solidity and concentration of this picture. The gård is not only central, it is well-nigh all. The usual openness and breadth of Österling's landscape is almost entirely lacking here. Neither the horizon in the distance nor the sky above is a part of this picture, though Österling's art is so subtle that the sensitive reader somehow senses their presence. It is in this very concentration

of detail, it would seem, that our poet is able to achieve such a faithful picture of the countryside of his home province.

Affectionately as he lingers over a farm-yard as such, and its immediate environs, and accurately as he reproduces them, he seems to respond with equal warmth and completeness to the hospitable interiors of these same picturesque farm homes on the prairie. In "Hösten, IV" occurs a characteristic bit of interior detail --

i ljumma stugors lugn
där Göran spetsar draken på en ugn.

This motif of St. Göran and the dragon, so casually mentioned here, is later to figure much more extensively in Österling's hembygdsdiktning. It seemed to have a special fascination to him even in boyhood, and later it plays a very important part in those provincial poems that are based largely upon childhood reminiscence. "Hösten, V" centres about another characteristic detail of the farm-house interior, in this case "gårdens bakugn," and though it commences promisingly enough, with a fresh selection of imagery thoroughly evocative of the Skånsk scene, it closes unhappily in a rather too obvious strain of moralizing. Österling is later to object to this same tendency toward moralizing in Wordsworth, and yet even in such a relatively objective volume as Årets visor he himself does not seem to have entirely escaped the same pitfall.[13] It is in "Hösten, VI" and "Sommaren, VI"

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[13]It is to be noted that when, in 1915, Österling first publishes a fragment of a translation of Wordsworth's poem entitled "Composed upon an evening of extraordinary splendour and beauty," he omits all of the stanzas of the original except the second. That he omits the other three stanzas because of their strongly moralizing tendencies would seem to be sufficiently obvious. This translation from Wordsworth first appeared in GHT., November 6, 1915, and later is reprinted with no changes in Främder och främlingar: ny samling (Stockholm, 1916), pp. 21-22.

that Österling's Skånsk interiors are most fresh and convincing, quite free of any moralizing tendencies and yet warmly human in their objectivity. The former of these is a reminiscence from a gård in which the poet had found lodging one bleak late autumn night --

> Ensamma gård, där jag fick rum en natt,
> när dina rutor blankt och sällsamt glodde,
> begravda halvt i vita rosenkratt,
> vad under då, om vandringsmannen trodde,
> att själva sommaren gått här förbi
> och tagit in i denna gård, den sista?
> Jag trivdes gott med kammarens logis,
> där fanns en vävstol och en ekekista,
> och vita bönor torkade i mängd
> på väggens rappning, och septembernatten
> rann som en dröm i en förtrollad ängd.
> Men genom rutan som ett isgrönt vatten
> såg jag, vid hanens första verop väckt,
> ros invid ros, av frosten svart och knäckt.

The fond listing of physical detail in the little bed-room --

> där fanns en vävstol och en ekekista,
> och vita bönor torkade i mängd
> på väggens rappning... --

reminds one inevitably of many such interiors in Francis Jammes; and it is quite possible that Österling's study of the French poet has had its significance here. Even more demonstrable, it seems to me, is the influence of Jammes upon another of Österling's interiors, the fanciful little sketch contained in "Sommaren, VII":

> En eftermiddags gyllne atmosfär
> i tomma rum med fällda rullgardiner
> är som en brygd av drömmar och begär,
> och alla möbler göra sura miner,
> när dörren går -- som om de åter störts
> i något riktigt roligt för sig själva --
> och uren höras som de alltid hörts,
> men svaga suckar under slagen skälva: --
> då är det sommaren, som utifrån
> släppts in och fått sitt tysta värdfolk vaket
> med ystra upptågs frömjölslätta hån,
> och, störd i festen, som stått högt i taket,
> fort skiftat hamn -- och nu blott som en vit
> och rädd Papilio flaxar hit och dit.

This stanza has certain interesting similarities with Jammes's

justly popular "La salle a manger" --

> Il y a une armoire a peine luisante
> qui a entendu les voix de mes grand'tantes,
> qui a entendu la voix de mon grand-père,
> qui a entendu la voix de mon père.
> A ces souvenirs l'armoire est fidèle.
> On a tort de croire qu'elle ne sait que se taire,
> car je cause avec elle.
>
> Il y a aussi un coucou en bois.
> Je ne sais pourquoi il n'a plus de voix.
> Je ne veux pas le lui demander.
> Peut-être bien qu'elle est cassée,
> la voix qui était dans son ressort,
> tout bonnement comme celle des morts.
>
> Il y a aussi un vieux buffet
> qui sent la cire, la confiture,
> la viande, le pain et les poires mûres.
> C'est un serviteur fidèle qui sait
> qu'il ne doit rien nous voler.
>
> Il est venu chez moi bien des hommes et des femmes
> qui n'ont pas cru a ces petites âmes.
> Et je souris que l'on me pense seul vivant
> quand un visiteur me dit en entrant:
> -- comment allez-vous, Monsieur Jammes?[14]

The two poems have the same half-humourous tone; they are motivated by the same fanciful central conception, a direct personification of articles of furniture; and even in the choice of detail objects they are curiously similar ("uren" and "un coucou," for example). My feeling that Österling's poem may have been directly influenced by Jammes is strengthened by the fact that "La salle a manger" is one of the poems by the French poet that seems to have most thoroughly attracted Österling. He came upon it for the first time, in the earliest years of the century, in the little volume of French verse entitled Poètes d'aujourd'hui (1st ed., Paris, 1904). In 1909 he takes occasion to cite it as "en hänförande dikt om sin [Jammes's] matsal" and in its concern with simple household detail as distinctly worthy of emulation.[15]

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[14] De l'angélus de l'aube a l'angélus du soir, 1888-1897 (Paris, 1926), pp. 59-60.

[15] Människor och landskap, p. 219.

Still later, in 1916, he publishes his translation of the poem.[16] Österling seems to have been fascinated almost as much by this poem as he was by Wordsworth's "She was a phantom of delight." We shall have occasion later to examine the influence of Wordsworth's poem upon the Swedish poet.

In "Sommaren, VI" the use of immediate physical detail is again very marked. The poem seems primarily concerned with offering us a miniature from the tiny fishing villages sprawled along the southern coast and evoking the tradition of the sea by means of a detailing of certain objects characteristic of sea-going life which lie scattered about the narrow confines of a little orchard surrounding the cottage of an old, retired sea captain. Though an occasional detail in Österling's stanza resembles certain things in Jammes's "Vieille marine" (see De l'angélus de l'aube a l'angélus du soir, 1888-1897), and there is the possibility of some slight borrowings here, the two poems are basically different on the whole even though they deal with the same general subject. Jammes's poem is largely exotic in its coloring and erotic in its motivation, while that of Österling is distinctly immediate, provincial, in its materials and largely realistic in its technique.

Det är en doft av många luftstreck över
den gröna trädgård, där en sjökapten,
som inga flera seglingar behöver,
på krattad kisel går på svaga ben.
Den ört som mången toddykväll förljuvat
här på rabatten ångar nikotin,
och de gallioner, som han själv har skruvat
från sina vrak, stå slingade med vin.
Med stela glober se de mellan träden
det duvna blå, där ingen brottsjö går,
och över stället susa skepparkväden,
men sländan darrar vid den gamles hår.
Klart skymtas rummen bak polerad ruta:
man vill till sist ha snyggt i sin kajuta.

Throughout this stanza there seems to be a kind of deep undertone

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[16] St. Dagbl., January 2, 1916.

reflective of a warm, sympathetic humour, an undertone that subtly prepares the reader for the almost Heine-like closing couplet of the piece. Österling might at various points in his extensive reading have learned something of the use of such a sudden revelation of motivation in the closing lines, but my guess is that he became most conscious of it in some Danish poet such as Sophus Claussen, who, incidentally was a great enthusiast for Heine. Österling himself seems never to have been directly interested in Heine; in all of his critical reviews I have come upon nothing but the merest references to Heine, and it is perhaps even more significant that he avoids Heine entirely in his German translations despite the fact that he translates from the German quite freely.

Our foregoing discussion has revealed how deeply Österling has become interested in his native province, Skåne, the wide sweep of its landscape as well as the immediate physical detail, the homes and farmyards and folk customs, of hembygden. It would be a mistake, however, to think that Österling's interest stopped here; the landscape of Skåne interested him much at this time, and likewise hembygden in its purely outward manifestations, but man interested him even more, and he never allows his concern for man to be displaced from its central position in Årets visor. Österling, it must be insisted upon, has never been interested merely in folk customs for their own sake, a tendency which is too often present in both Fröding and Karlfeldt, and much moreso in their less gifted disciples. On several occasions in his criticism Österling has spoken with considerable disparagement of the efforts on the part of some to restore old customs which no longer are a vital part of the folk tradition,[17] and he has nothing but

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[17] In a little review of C. W. von Sydow's study of the Scandinavian May ballad "God afton om I hemma är!" he has this to

ridicule for the mania for dialect poetry which had sprung up in the wake of Fröding's real successes in the genre. Seldom is Österling's criticism so withering as it is in a reference to dialect verse contained in a review of current Swedish lyric poetry, including paragraphs on Harald Johnsson's Djupens sånger... and Torsten Holm's Gråväders- och hvardagslåtar.

> Att döma af åtskilligt experimentgods i denna samling befinner sig Harald Johnssons lyriska talang i en brytningstid. Påverkan af Fröding är särskilt tydlig. Som helhet är detta häfte afgjort svagare och osäkrare i greppen än dess föregångare, men kanske likväl -- negativt -- tyder på inre omsättning och utveckling.
>
> Hur pass äkta själva den lyriska naturgrunden likväl är hos Göingelyrikern ses i hvarje fall tydligt, om man sedan får Torsten Holms pseudobondska 'Gråväders- och hvardagslåtar' i sin hand. Det är pinsamt undermåligt. I själva inledningsdikten, en munter apostrofering af en ruskig grå hvardagsmorgon, finns ändå ett stänk poethumör, men det går strax öfver. Sedan bär det i väg med allehanda obesvärat talanglösa trallar och drillar i sämsta bygdegenre:
>
> Fi-lu, fi-li, hurra!
> nu dansa vi å sta'...
> -- i sus och dus
> med armen kring
> din medjas ring
> så späd och fin som ingenting
> till valsens brus.
> Fi-lu, fi-li, hurra!
> nu dansa vi å sta'...
>
> Stopp, stopp i Apollons heliga namn! Och låt mig här, som det på riktigt bondemål heter, sitta ett slag och pusta![18]

Though interested to an extent in dialect experiments in poetry, Österling himself has written nothing in the manner, except for

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say in his closing paragraph: "Även andra kuriösa gamla majvisor meddelas minutiöst i Sydows lilla givande och roande studie, som anbefalles åt var och en för ämnet intresserad. Även där ej förhandsintresset finnes är den populära framställningen f. ö. ägnad att väcka håg för folkminnesstudiet och därmed kärlek till hembygden. En annan fråga är om själva majseden verkligen i enlighet med författarens en smula optimistiska vädjan låter sig uppväckas i våra moderna bysamhällen och om ett sådant skenliv ens vore önskligt, sedan den heliga naiviteten en gång för alla är försvunnen. Den organiserade lantarbetaren sjunger nu för tiden en helt annan majsång, nämligen Arbetets söner, som sannolikt ej diktades i det gröna." GHT., July 4, 1917.

[18] GHT., November 8, 1911.

his occasional use of dialect words in Bäckahästen, his lyric-dramatic allegory from 1909. In a conversation on the subject with me he referred to his use of dialect in Bäckahästen as merely "en tillfällig experiment, eller rättare sagt halv experiment. Jag använde skånska ord bara att ge det en lätt färg av dialekt." He insisted further that "dialekt är en begränsing," an artificial technical limitation, which no poet could afford to restrict himself to except within the confines of a certain strictly limited subject matter. Fröding did it well, Österling admitted, and yet Fröding's greatest poetry is not that which he did in dialect.

It should be clear from all of this that Österling's interest in hembygden goes much more deeply than an antiquarian concern for either the restoration of old customs or the use of dialect in poetry. His concern for hembygden is primarily centred upon man as he exists in this hembygd, the native of Skåne as he lives and moves and has his being today. He is interested only in those customs and traditions of the past that are still sufficiently actual to add color and vitality to the life of the present-day native of Skåne. Årets visor becomes thus, with all of its intimate associations with the old traditions of Skåne, primarily a series of poems centering upon man as he lives today rather than upon those aspects of his life that come to us from out of a dead past. In some of Österling's later work, most markedly in Jordens heder (1927), the traditions and customs of his native province are given somewhat more emphasis than in Arets visor, but nowhere in his poetry is such an emphasis predominant. Österling has never identified himself with those features of nittiotalet which tended to look upon the function of poetic creation as primarily a faithful reproduction of the past.

The central place that man occupies in Årets visor is to

be explained largely in terms of Österling's own essential humanity. This personal quality of the poet was aroused, after the chaotic subjectivism of the period which the poet himself later characterized as "brytningsårens förtvivlade ovisshet," by certain new literary influences from without, especially those of Jammes and Wordsworth, to some extent that of such a Danish poet as Kai Hoffmann. Österling could have found little in contemporary Skånsk art to arouse in him an interest for man; it was, as we have seen, primarily a landscape art, curiously devoid of human motifs.[19] It is also doubtful that Skånsk poetry could have influenced him to any marked extent toward an interest in man; there is, indeed, a great deal of it in Bååth, who may well have had some importance for Österling in this regard, but in Österling's more immediate predecessors and contemporaries it is my feeling that he could have found little to his taste in this matter. Ola Hansson's early poetry contains much of the social pathos of åttiotalet, it is true, but these poems are done usually in such a crude manner (see e. g. "Allting gott," "Idyllen," and "En liten historia" in Dikter, 1884) that they would hardly tend to encourage an interest in their subjects in such an essentially artistic nature as that of Österling. In Ekelund likewise he probably found little of interest beyond those influences which we have already noted as operative upon Preludier.[20] Ekelund's more real-

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[19]Yngve von Schmidten, a critic active in southern Swedish art circles, decries this lack of an interest in man among the artists of Skåne in an interesting article entitled "Efter tio år" published in the official organ of a group of Skånsk artists. "Med folklifsskildringen," he writes, "är det tyvärr för närvarande klent beställdt i Skåne såväl som i öfriga delar af Sverige. Vår målarkonst glömmer alltför mycket bort människan." Skånekonst (Malmö, 1912), p. 16.

[20]It should be recorded, however, that there does seem to be at least one case of a striking influence on Österling from one of Ekelund's early poems dealing with a distinctly human sub-

istic things dealing with man are usually peasant studies in the manner of Fröding; only occasionally does one come upon pieces in Ekelund that are reminiscent of the social pathos of Åttio-talet and Ola Hansson's early verse, though when he does handle such themes he does so with less of false pathos and technical crudity than did Ola Hansson.

One of the reasons that the southern Swedish literary public received the little volume Årets visor with such unmixed enthusiasm may well have been that the central place of man in these poems had for this public the effect of novelty. Previous to this all too often the only human figure in lyric poetry was the poet himself, either quite frankly, or in various thinly disguised forms. The result was an excess of lyrical subjectivity that grew wearying in the long run no matter how intriguing it may have been to the reader when he first came upon it in a given case. Uppsvensk poets had solved this lyric problem much more satisfactorily than had the Skånsk poets around the turn of the century, though even they did not completely escape from the danger of subjectivity. Karlfeldt merely hid his own personality behind such "created" characters as Fridolin, who was at one and the same time a naive peasant spirit and a sensitive man of culture ("och han talar med bönder på böndernas sätt -- men med lärde men på latin").[21] Fröding, on the other hand, seems to

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ject. I refer to the little thing entitled "Utanför blomsterbutiken" (Vårbris, 1900), which bears a striking resemblance to Österling's "Vintern, IV" (in Årets visor). The central motif in both poems is identical; each of them is dominated by the same tone of social pathos; and even in detail matters of imagery there is a strong resemblance between the two poems. The fact that the two human figures in the one case are mother and child and in the other two lovers is an insignificant variation.

[21]An interesting discussion of this aspect of Karlfeldt's art is to be found in Castrén's chapter on Karlfeldt in Schück and Warburg's Illustrerad svensk litteratur historia, VII, 366-67.

have been far more objective in his method. He had more of the dramatist's power to project characters outside himself than is usually true of an essentially lyric gift. His "Jägar Malms hustru," "En fattig munk från Skara," and "Våran prost" are not entirely devoid of Fröding's own personal characteristics, it is true, but they are at least relatively objective characterizations. In Österling's treatment of man in Årets visor he has escaped largely from the extreme subjectivism which had been the besetting sin in his earlier work, especially in Preludier, though he has not avoided it completely. Österling's position in Årets visor seems to be one midway between the methods of Karlfeldt and Fröding; he never resorts to the rather thin lyrical disguises of Karlfeldt, nor does he attain fully to the relative objectivity of Fröding's depiction of man.

Österling's treatment of man in Årets visor is further to be distinguished from both Karlfeldt and Fröding in that it is perhaps less deeply rooted in hembygden as such than one at first thought might suppose. He has no direct full length sketch of the peasant type (skånska bonden) in Årets visor; it is not until later, particularly in Idyllernas bok (1917) and Jordens heder (1927), that he has rooted himself deeply enough in the folk life of his province so that he as fondly lingers over the native of Skåne as Karlfeldt does for that of Dalarne and Fröding for Värmland. Only to a certain limited extent does Österling occupy himself with the peasant in Årets visor; his treatment of man in this little volume is, as a matter of fact, an effort to depict all classes of people in his southern province, and many of these classes, it must be admitted, are not necessarily peculiar to Skåne at all. The reason for Österling's failure to give a profounder characterization of the Skånsk peasant in this volume is probably

that his knowledge of hembygden was at this time necessarily limited; it was based largely on relatively superficial reminiscences from his childhood and youth, reminiscences that could hardly have penetrated deeply enough to enable him to depict skånska bonden as adequately as he was to in his later, more mature volumes. The milieu of many of the poems in Årets visor is the prairie countryside of Skåne, indeed, but seldom does man in this milieu, the native peasant of Skåne, emerge with anything like the firmness and clarity that characterizes the efforts of Karlfeldt and Fröding in the same vein.

Inasmuch as Österling's treatment of man here is based primarily upon his reminiscences from childhood and youth, we should expect that many of the poems in which man is treated in Årets visor would occupy themselves with these early years. And this is true. We have already seen in our analysis of the formative influences upon Offerkransar and Hälsningar that the attitude of poetic naiveté is one of the qualities toward which Österling was striving during the years immediately after the publication of Preludier. This attitude has carried over into Årets visor. In one of the earliest stanzas in this volume, "Våren, II," a buoyant sketch of the landscape of Skåne in the month of March, the poet speaks of a feeling "som barn och skalder ana förr än andra"; and Österling's preoccupation with children and youth in a great many of the stanzas in Årets visor is but further evidence of the poet's desire to depict this phase of human response to his native province. His treatment of childhood is to be found particularly in the most idyllic section of the volume, that on "Sommaren," most markedly in stanzas VIII, X, and XI. In the first of these the poet seeks to recapture his childhood sense of mystery in the presence of an ancient burial mound on the prairie --

den hemlighet, som brydde mig som barn
och tvang mitt hjärta till den första sången.[22]

"Sommaren, X," based on another reminiscence from childhood, gives a picture of the intense, animal-like enthusiasm with which a boy enters into the spirit of the harvest labour. A distinctly more idyllic piece, with a strong admixture of poetic sentiment, is "Sommaren, XI" --

Strax vid en by höll kompaniet rast,
mot vita ränslar sjönko trötta nackar,
och hela marschens aftonarmod brast
i varje man, när mellan skumma stackar
en fredlig rök steg blå i bleknad sol.
Allt blev så djupt och ljust i solnedgången...
Småflickor tallade med upplyft kjol
ut ur en täppas murgrönsgrind, och fången
de hade fyllt med blommor... dagg och doft...
helt skyggt de nalkades, det teg i leden,
tungt lyftes ögonen från vägens stoft.
Och skalden som hans vapenbroder smeden
i butter glädje deras gåva tog
och förde den till läpparna och log.

This stanza seems to have been based upon an actual experience in the life of the poet, but the manner of its treatment is strongly reminiscent of Jammes or Wordsworth. It reminds one of such things in the French poet as "La jeune fille est blanche" and "La jeune fille un peu souffrante..." (see De l'angélus de l'aube a l'angèlus du soir) in its gently sentimental attachment to little girls of the countryside as well as in the detail of the flowers. The two poems by Jammes have, it is true, a stronger element of "den enkla barmherigheten mot det lidande livet," which Österling, we have seen, found to be one of the peculiar marks of the French poet's genius, but otherwise they are strongly suggestive of both

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[22]In his later volumes Österling is to return to the theme of these ancient Skånsk burial mounds (dösen) on various occasions, but in these later pieces his approach to the material is much more mature and profoundly imaginative. "Ales stenar," in Tonen från havet (1932), by common consent of critics one of the finest things Österling has ever done, is his greatest triumph with this motif.

the general tone and the specific use of detail in Österling's piece.[23] Another of the poems in Årets visor that one suspects is inspired by much the same strain in such a poet as Jammes is "Sommaren, IV," the fascinatingly fanciful little thing in which the summer flowers are endowed by the poet with the delicate sentiments of young lovers languishing to realize their innocent love.

On the other hand, the more robust, rollicking strain in Jammes, whom Österling at one time called "den friskaste begåvningen inom sitt lands moderna poesi," must also have had its significance for our Swedish poet in his treatment of childhood and youth, particularly perhaps the latter. I seem to detect this influence most strongly in "Våren, XI" with its fresh, open spontaneity of tone and its innocent play of youthful sentiment.[24] Jammes in the same vein, it must be admitted, is apt to be constantly bordering on the warmly sensuous side of the experience of youthful attachment, if not actually giving this element free reign, whereas Österling is for the most part quite free from this, especially in his poetry up through Blommande träd (1910). In Facklor i stormen (1913) the physical side of love is given more attention, it is true, but in this volume the poet is primarily occupied with mature passion rather than with casual youthful attachments between the sexes. On the whole Österling's early treatment of the theme of youthful affection, even that between the sexes, is unusually free of the physical element. But this should in no way invalidate our theory that the Swedish poet is indebted to Jammes in his handling of the theme of youthful

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[23]Österling admitted to me the probable influence of Jammes upon this stanza.

[24]Österling again concurs with my impression here.

attachment, for the difference here between Österling and the French poet is hardly more than the general dissimilarity between the Scandinavian and the French treatment of the theme of love in poetry.

We have mentioned "Sommaren, XI," the sentimental little road-side idyll, as somewhat reminiscent of Wordsworth, though it has been perhaps more directly inspired by Jammes. Two other stanzas in Årets visor, "Sommaren, IX" and "Hösten, II," bear a much more striking resemblance to Wordsworth. The motif of the former, one to which Österling returns again and again in his later volumes, is that of such things in Wordsworth as "The Solitary Reaper," a poet standing aside on the heath not wishing to disturb a maiden whose thoughts seem far away in some other world.[25] The resemblance to Wordsworth here is a general one, it must be admitted, and perhaps one not to be insisted upon too strenuously; but any lover of English poetry will instantly recognize the Wordsworthian mark in "Hösten, II" --

> Min kära kläder sig i svart och får
> det ögats allvar under blåsigt hår,
> som endast lovar, vad det tryggt kan hålla.
> Bort med de flor och slöjor som förtrolla
> till bråda ord och ängslande begär!
> Nu vill jag se min kära som hon är,
> en av de andra, men i allas vimmel
> ledsagerskan. Du höstens rena himmel
> förlåt oss allt, men blås ej bort den sång,
> sommaren lade på vår mun en gång,
> stäm in den klokt i vad du själv oss lärde
> på sena vandringar, som blott beskärde
> fåmälta samtal och försagda fjät
> i bladfallsskimrets röda majestät!

The central theme of this stanza -- a girl of dreams, and yet "ledsagerskan,"

> det ögats allvar under blåsigt hår
> som endast lovar, vad det tryggt kan hålla --

is unquestionably that of "She was a phantom of delight." No piece by a foreign poet seems more to have fascinated Österling

down through the years than did this thing by Wordsworth. It is the first piece by the English poet that Österling translated, already as early as 1906. This translation, however, did not satisfy him, with the result that a much altered version came out later in the first little volume of Fränder och främlingar in 1912. The persistence with which the theme of "She was a phantom of delight" has maintained itself in Österling's own poetry might easily be demonstrated by the citation of a number of his poems, the most striking of which are his "Kvinnobild" in Idyllernas bok (1917) and "Hos blommorna" in Tonen från havet (1933).[25]

It must be admitted, however, that on the whole Österling's treatment of the theme of feminine youth in Årets visor is not as prevailingly realistic or practical as such a stanza as "Hösten, II" might imply. He has, indeed, escaped completely in this volume from the pale, bodiless nymphs who float vaguely through the pages of Preludier; but Årets visor is nevertheless still essentially romantic in its handling of maidenly youth. The form that his new romanticism takes here, however, is usually that of the rather more substantial wood-nymph, the fascinating huldra figure, of Scandinavian folk-legend. It is in two of the finest stanzas in "Våren," the seventh and the tenth, that the figure of the huldra is central. The former of these is the intensely imaginative "En naken huldra..." --

> En naken huldra gick här nyss förbi,
> och ännu viskar vägens pil därom,
> hon bar ej slånens blommor i sin famn,
> och ändå blommar slånen, där hon kom,
> hon nämnde ingen jordfödd älsklings namn,
> och ändå ekar allt av het musik.
> Men dessa trolskt förvuxna vita snår
> och dessa pilvedfljöters hedna skrik

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[25]Österling concurs with my theory of indebtedness in these poems. We shall have occasion later to examine this influence more in detail.

blott den förstår, som under molnen går
och tigger himlens vindar om besked
var natt, när mossens isar gå itu,
om varför bröstet aldrig kan få fred
av vårlig törst till blom och sång ännu. --
En naken huldra gick här nyss förbi.

The latter is a bit more idyllic, more fancifully imaginative, less intense --

Det rusar vatten genom snår och gläntа,
ett tusenstämmigt, underjordiskt väll,
och under sälgarna, som sorgset vänta
på gyllne skott, som spricka tyst mot kväll,
majskogens egen vattenögda flicka
ur sina gömselns bruna skymning går
och låter stjärnan sina tårar dricka
och låter vinden reda ut sitt hår.
Hon går med samma flamlikt lätta fötter
på källors skum och vita sippors mark,
och likt en ekorr har hon levt på nötter,
dem hon förvarat i en korg av bark,
och som hon endast syster är åt alla,
ler hon när blomstren henne moder kalla.

It is to be noted that despite the relative intensity of the imaginative conception in these two pieces, an imaginative conception richly suggestive of the mysterious identification of huldran and the larger world of nature about her, the poet gives to his wood-nymph few of the sinister qualities with which she is usually invested in northern folk-legend. She is not here the beautiful but siren-like creature of tradition. Österling uses the traditional huldra merely as a convenient base for his conception, handling the figure of folk-legend with a freedom thoroughly modern, just as he later insists on doing with the Skånsk bäckahäst in his fanciful dramatic allegory on the theme. This exclusion of the more sinister aspects of the huldra tradition might be attributed to various causes, the two most important probably being the general tone of optimism that prevails throughout Årets visor and the literary influences indeperient of the huldra tradition that may have helped to shape his conception here. My feeling is that both Kai Hoffmann and Francis Jammes had not a little

to do with the ultimate form that the huldra took in these two stanzas of Österling's. Both Hoffmann and Jammes have done things with the same theme and for the most part in the same manner. There are details in "En naken huldra..." that remind one much of Hoffmann's "Sommerens nymfe," though the general conception of the Danish poet's piece is somewhat different.

> Den øde, den raakolde Efteraarsskov,
> hvor Regnluften graaned, og Dybderne sov.
> Den blodrøde Vej under bladløse Traer,
> hvor Kvinder har hvisket: O, har du mig kaer!
> -- Dèr mødte jeg Sommerens Nymfe!
>
> Hun kom i sin Nøgenheds hjemløse Pragt --
> og stansed. -- Dèr stod hun. -- Den yderste Vagt!
> Og skøn og forladt paa den frysende Jord
> hun hviskede til mig smaa hidsende Ord.
> Hun klaged sig for mig og stod mig saa naer:
> O, gaa ikke fra mig! O, hav mig lidt kaer!
>
> Da bøjed jeg mig -- og til faelles Trøst
> jeg kyssede blidt hendes højre Bryst.
> -- Mit flygtige Kys i den yderste Stund
> skal ikke, o Nymfe, beruse din Mund!
> Min Laebe har rørt ved dit Legemes Frugt --
> du kan ikke, kan ikke stanse mit Flugt!
>
> Den skumrende Vej i den ensomme Skov,
> hvor Regnen begyndte, mens Dybderne sov.
> Dèr gik jeg -- til Mørkets og Vinterens Hi --
> den bedende Dejlighed hastigt forbi.
>
> Jeg kyssede kun -- som en isnende Trøst --
> hendes glødende Bryst!

This poem came out in Under Solen in 1907, the same year as the publication of Årets visor, and it is very probable that Österling had read it. Hoffmann's poem, however, has retained much more of the sinister coloring of the northern folk tradition proper, an element that is barely hinted at in a line or two of Österling's poem. He may have learned something of relative freedom in treating the theme of huldran from his reading of poetry dealing with the traditional French wood-nymph in Francis Jammes. The French poet, indeed, is oftentimes so free in his treatment that he seems to confuse human maidens with the at best only half-human wood-nymphs (as in "Elle était descendue au

bas de la prairie" in the section entitled "Tristesses" in Clairières dans le ciel, 1902-1906); but in such a thing as "Tu serais nue sur la bruyère..." (in De l'angélus de l'aube a l'angélus du soir, 1888-1897) he seems to be much more faithful to folk tradition --

> Tu serais nue sur la bruyère humide et rose,
> comme ces femmes qu'on apprend en classe, près
> de chèvres se donnant des coups au bas des près.
> Tu dormirais en ne rêvant d'aucune chose,
> et tes jambes pareilles, tièdes et douces
> luiraient dans la pluie verte et glacée de la mousse.
> Ton corps serait comme l'air et l'eau qui sont purs.
> Un grillon aigre chanterait dans le vieux mur
> d'une maison abandonnée et qui aurait,
> a ses pieds, les champignons roses des forêts.
> Les alouettes qui ont la couleur de l'argent
> siffleraient en volant vite. Et, tout en dormant,
> tu mettrais une main dans tes cheveux remplis
> de brins de paille agaçants de roides épis.

Such a thoroughly fanciful re-creation of the naked nymph of the heath, with its graceful, airy metrical movement and its subtle interplay of natural imagery, might well have shown the way to Österling in "Det rusar vatten genom snår och gläntа," though the similarity of the two poems is general rather than particular, and it might be a bit reckless to insist upon a direct indebtedness here. At any rate, it would seem that Jammes's constant preoccupation with feminine youth, human and other, in his early poetry must have had some significance for the Swedish poet who was reading him, as we have seen, with genuine enthusiasm during these years.

A consciousness of the more realistic and practical side of woman, on the other hand, though possibly suggested to some extent by Jammes, was apparently primarily inspired by Wordsworth. This, we have already tried to demonstrate, is already present in the sketch of maidenhood beloved in "Hösten, II" in Årets visor. Three years after the publication of Årets visor the more real-

istic conception of woman reappears in "Slättens huldra" (in Blommande träd); and in this latter case, it is important to note, that though the word huldra is employed as a part of the title, she is now "Slättens huldra," a wholly human huldra, no longer the fanciful wood-nymph of "En naken huldra..." and "Det rusar vatten..."

We do not have to go to the pages of Blommande träd, however, to find human figures treated in a realistic manner; they are plentiful enough in Årets visor. It was quite natural that Österling's treatment of childhood and youth should at points lead to the romantic and fanciful; but when he turns, as he does quite often in Årets visor, to the treatment of humanity on its more mature plane he seldom departs from the creed of the poetic realist which he was gradually sensing during even these early years and which was to find an exact critical formulation a few years later in "Anmärkningar till dagens lyrik" (1909). It might be said that Österling uses two methods in his approach to this more mature human problem: in Årets visor he quite often employs the little sketch so characteristic of the volume, offering in each case a little episode or an interior representing some phase of everyday life; more occasionally he gives us a stanza in which something more of the theorist is involved, material which approaches in a sense a sort of "philosophy" of the commonplace. All of the stanzas that can be included in either of these two classes are found, interestingly enough, in the sections on "Hösten" and "Vintern," and all except one of these stanzas is in the latter of these sections. "Våren" and "Sommaren" are apparently to Österling the seasons of childhood and youth and the broad, open spaces of the prairie landscape; whereas "Hösten" and "Vintern" seem to remind him of the more immediate, realistic

human problems.

Four little sketches in "Vintern," including IV, VII, VIII, and IX, reveal clearly the poet's sympathy with the everyday life of man and with some of the tragedies of the human lot. The first of these is a sentimental little piece, in all probability indebted to Ekelund, which handles the element of pathos inherent in the life of a poverty stricken pair of lovers;[26] the second gives us a realistically sympathetic picture of a pregnant woman of the lower classes outlined against the raw sky-line of a northern seacoast; the third provides a gently human episode from the fast-ebbing life of a young consumptive, apparently a companion from the poet's youth; and the last occupies itself with the feeling of a warm common understanding among men which comes upon inhabitants of a city upon the approach of the winter season. The first and the third of these are rather ordinary things poetically speaking, being characterized by a false note of pathos; but the second and the fourth are solid, substantial pieces that seem to promise much for the new humanitarian strain that is creeping into Österling's poetry. The sketch of the pregnant woman is especially noteworthy --

> En flock av kvinnor ser jag framåt streta
> i kustens backar, där med kulet ljus
> vanmäktigt bleka fjärran strålar leta
> sig väg bland närdingar och kalkstenshus --
> men tungt och stort den sista kvinnans sköte
> mot vattnets råa vinter tecknats av,
> en havandes, och detta vardagsmöte
> i blåsig skymningsluft av tång och hav
> är mig så värmande, att jag välsignar
> det frö som sover i den armas liv
> och önskar henne, när hon tröttkörd dignar
> från sega arbetsveckors id och kiv,
> att sol må tindra genom stugans ruta
> den tysta dag, då hennes våndor sluta.

There is nothing here of false pathos or mere sentiment; each de-

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[26] See supra, pp. 215-16.

tail in the sketch is broad, solid, convincing, and the going out of the poet's sympathy toward the woman seems wholly natural and genuine. The same solid, convincing realism of detail is present in the stanza treating the neighborhood of homes in the city as winter draws on --

> Novemberdimman som en översvämning
> slår in från havet, klibbande vid allt,
> och hela staden som en öde lämning
> på torrlagd havsdy stinker jod och salt.
> Nu tryggar stadsbon sig till gatuljusen
> som till sin rigg en huttrande matros,
> och det är gott att andas genom husen
> de många kökens meddelsamma os.
> Det går i våningarnas innandömen
> från hem till hem ett skrammel av servis
> och golven spinna i den tysta strömmen
> av hyggligt samförstånd och smaklig spis --
> och medan tjockan allt i mörker sänker,
> om sina grannar åter gott man tänker.

This is stämningskonst, indeed, but stämningskonst in the best sense of the term; it avoids completely the vague, floating imagery of the usual run of poetry in this manner, and it is even more free of the sentimental than "En flock av kvinnor ser jag framåt streta."

The section on "Vintern" closes with two pieces more broadly inclusive in their themes, so broadly inclusive, in fact, that they might be held to be a formulation of Österling's poetic credo in Årets visor. The first of these brings us again into the limits of the home circle ("livets boningar"), and it goes on to glorify the substantial values that the simplest objects, "så grå, så bra," can bring.

> Midvintermörkret sammandrager ringen
> kring livets boningar med is och våda,
> och det är nu vi lära vörda tingen,
> de få och fattiga, som än vi skåda.
> Med ens vi varsna dem, så grå, så bra,
> men själva känna de från längesedan
> oss, höga människor, som de bevara
> dag efter dag från ångesten och ledan.
> Nu luta vi oss broderligt till alla
> och fråga vackert dem till råds i nöden,

idoler som vi ångerfullt åkalla,
när natten brusar av den kalla döden.
Med stjärnornas och blomstrens alla namn
vi pressa tingen i vår frusna famn.

The theoretical emphasis here upon "tingen, de få och fattiga, som än vi skåda," those things that protect us "höga människor... dag efter dag från ångesten och ledan," reminds one strongly of the same theoretical emphasis on the commonplace phenomena and everyday experiences of life that Österling stresses in such earlier volumes as Offerkransar and Hälsningar. Now, however, the emphasis is more convincing, for it comes at the close of a volume in which this theoretical emphasis has been more adequately realized in a soundly realistic art. That the poet feels something of his new triumph here, and that he realizes its significance for his art in the future, is sufficiently clear from the last stanza in "Vintern" --

De rimfrostljusa träden stå och spana
och finna grannarna så plötsligt skära,
ty de ha ingen spegelbild och ana
ej därför skimret som de själva bära.
I drömmar goda under kronor vita
jag går emot en tyst och tapper lycka,
på vars fördolda värme jag kan lita,
fast det finns kalla händer blott att trycka.
Ty jag vill böja huvudet belåten
och taga på mig dessa prövotider,
att sedan blommor dugga må i gråten,
som salt och stelnad i mitt öga svider.
Jag vill ej se mig själv, men blott de andra.
Det är min väg. Och den har jag att vandra.

The closing couplet is especially revealing: Österling's poetic creed is no longer the subjective melancholy of Preludier, but rather the objective humanitarianism that he so richly realizes in Årets visor --

Jag vill ej se mig själv, men blott de andra.
Det är min väg. Och den har jag att vandra.

ii.

Årets visor is without question the most significant vol-

ume from the early years of Österling's poetic development down through Blommande träd (1910), and as such it has called for close examination in this study. We need hardly concern ourselves so much in detail with either Blommande träd or Bäckahästen (1909), the two volumes of poetry that round out the period of poetic development which is the immediate concern of our investigation. In the main they represent, perhaps, a certain tentative falling off in Österling's poetic powers. Certainly they show little evidence of any really consistent development along the lines of poetic realism that had been suggested by Årets visor. The two new volumes, especially Blommande träd, are to be looked upon, apparently, as a couple of interesting experiments, not entirely successful, in which the poet is feeling his way toward something which he scarcely can be said to have realized. This something might be defined in general as a certain richer gathering of the poetic powers and a certain more convincing deepening of the poetic response which Årets visor, despite its many undeniable qualities, did not have. Årets visor was objective enough, indeed, and thoroughly intriguing in its fresh spontaneity of tone; but it was sketchy, even superficial at points, and it obviously lacked that profounder sense of reality which is the unique mark of really great exponents of poetic realism such as Wordsworth or Goethe. In a sense, it must even be admitted, Årets visor had some of the traits of epigonpoesi, though it did manage to escape from most of the more obvious pitfalls of such verse.

The chief reason for the falling off in quality of both Bäckahästen and Blommande träd is probably to be found primarily in the fact that Österling, not being satisfied merely to carry on in the same strain as he had done in Årets visor, was continuously seeking new forms for his poetic expression. Årets visor

was a volume in which youth had spoken, spontaneously, warmly, honestly, but in the limited sense in which youth always speaks. Österling could no more be content with such a relatively superficial realism than he could be satisfied with the traditional responses to landscape and hembygd which were the common stock-in-trade of the usual landskapskonst and landskapsdiktning of his day.[27] He felt, even after the undoubted success of Årets visor, the necessity of further development; he had to find new combinations and broader vistas than those that had already been realized, perhaps all too easily, both by himself and others. And because he was still young, and his experience of life rather limited, his efforts to extend the poetic horizon during these

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[27] Österling's opinion as to the limitations of traditional landskapsdiktning, even the best of it, is given very lucid expression in the very year of the publication of Blommande träd in a review of Theodor Tufvesson's Där hemma och andra dikter. "Det är en av de minsta diktböcker," he writes of this volume in GHT, June 9, 1909, "en människa kan taga i sin grova hand -- ett tjugotal dikter endast, icke många rader hvardera, allt i miniatyr, smått men fint och utan en skymt af förmätna anspråk.

"En poesi af det slag, som dessa små sidor erbjuda, förutsätter måhända ett nödvändigt supplement af stämningserfarenhet hos läsaren. Det blir i särskild mening dennes förråd af egna minnesbilder, som får utfylla och afrunda, hvad dikternas korta rader endast antyda. Eljes är det själsliga innehållet visst icke särdeles apart, hvar och en kan snart finna sig till rätta i dessa stämningar. En despotisk poet nödgar oss att förnimma på hans vis, att andlöst späja och lyssna med hans ögon och öron. Men Theodor Tufvesson har intet som hälst drag af denna fägnesamma despotism. Hans dikt endast gnolar. Det är som en promenad med en musikalisk vän, han hvisslar ett motiv, och genast fortsätter hela musikstycket att spela inom oss själfva. Och just därför, att denna poesi utsäger och beskrifver så föga, tryggt litande på läsarens egen stämningsmottaglighet, diskret hänvändande sig till hans egen erfarenhet af hemlandskapet i sol och regn, med rännilar och dungar, ensliga hus och skymningshimlar, blir den så alldeles hjälplöst provinsiellt betonad. Den dricker ingalunda friskt och törstigt ur bygdens eviga brunnar, den är nog rätt traditionell, men den ger sig heller icke ut för att vara splitter ny. Man kan slå upp alldeles på måfå:

> I brinkarnas gräs går ett ängsligt sus,
> det börjar att iskallt dugga.
> Blekt slår ett ljus från ett ensamt hus
> in i mossens växande skugga.

"Hvar och en som sett en kolteckning eller litografi af Ernst Norlind skall känna sig hemma i ett stämningsanslag som detta.

years were not always happy ones. It was not until ten years after Årets visor, in Idyllernas bok (1917), that he really attained his poetic maturity as landskapsdiktare; and in the meantime, as is to be seen in such volumes as Facklor i stormen (1913) and Sånger i krig (1916), the poet was to undergo experiences of a far more disturbing nature than the efforts attendant upon the striving to effect a merely literary ideal.

In Bäckahästen Österling is experimenting with the lyrical drama. He had attempted a couple of dramatic pieces before, the curiously immature Nattens röster (1906), whose chief interest lies in the fact that it represents a sort of day-of-accounting with the poet's early aestheticism, and Döden incognito (1908), a rather worthless dramatic fantasy in the manner of Sophus Claussen; but not until the publication of Bäckahästen does Österling attain to anything in the dramatic genre whose virtues may perhaps overbalance its rather obvious faults.

Viewed strictly as drama in the usual sense of the term, Bäckahästen has certain grave defects, the most glaring of which is the inadequate handling of character. With one or two exceptions the characters in this little play are totally undeveloped,

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"Äfven när det är slättsommarens blommande fägring som besjunges, förblir rösten i dessa små trofasta dikter elegiskt vek, klagar just icke, men darrar alltid på en gång blid och beklämd under sin börda af öfverkänslig skönhetsglädje. Icke allt är lika godt och läsvärdt i samlingen -- men en sak som denna är ju odelat sympatisk:

Därute rinner vägen
hvit i solens sken,
med maskros och konvolvel
blommande längs dikesren.
Rinner ut i gröna vångar
genom klöfverfält i blom,
långt bort i slättens vida
sommarrikedom.
Rinner genom gula rågar
som i vågor gå,
förbi tysta gårdar --
rakt in i himlens blå.

"Det är icke önskligt, att den skånska poesien alltför länge håller ut just denna vilje-passiva ton -- men det blir en senare fråga. Dessa alltid litet indolent undfångna dikter bereda väl alltid någon glädje, och typen är som sagt i all sin begränsning sympatisk."

left in the most elementary and fragmentary forms; and even in the case of the exceptions, such as the wealthy peasant Kristoffer, the central figure in the play, we search in vain for the materials of the psychological crisis which are supposed to have transformed him into a new person in the last act. This lack of psychological motivation in the handling of character, however, is no final fault in such a play as Bäckahästen. "Detta är begränsningen," writes Fredrik Böök in a very sympathetic early review of the play, "men det är icke något fel, utom för de skarpsinniga domare, som nitiskt klandra äppleträdet därför att det icke bär körsbär. Bäckahästen är ett lyriskt sagospel och icke något drama."[28] As a lyrical folk play it can dispense very well with the rigid psychological motivation of drama strictly speaking. Such a folk play calls for certain qualities peculier to its special genre, and these Bäckahästen so adequately fulfills as to give it a prominent place in the genre in Scandinavian literature.

It is, for example, the only really adequate literary treatment of bäckahästen, the strange legendary being, half man, half horse, that figures so prominently in the folk tradition of Skåne. The folk tradition itself, however, provides merely the point of departure for Österling's interpretation, for he insists upon handling the theme with entirely modern freedom. In a little prefatory sketch to Bäckahästen the poet himself reveals to the reader, in a light, bantering, verbosely gossipy vein, the exact relation between his twentieth century bäckahäst and the bäckahäst of Skånsk peasant tradition.

> Du kan näppeligen ogilla företal mera än den, som trots sitt ogillande denna gång själf ser sig nödsakad skrifva ett

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[28] Studier och ströftåg i dikten och historien (Stockholm, 1911), pp. 45-46.

sådant. Jag måste nämligen förberedelsevis omtala, hvad det är för slags häst, som gifvit namn åt denna dikt. Du kan känna den svenska faunen ganska väl och dock vara okunnig om Bäckahästen. Gamla auktorer af otvifvelaktig pondus förmäla emellertid om denne, att han är ett i vårt lands sydligare provinser förekommande vattentroll, som oftast har skepnad af en hvitgrå häst. Han benämnes äfven Bäckamannen. I arga stunder drager han folk med sig i djupet, sedan han låtit dem taga plats på sin långa, inbjudande rygg, och många andra fasans skälmstycken har han utfört i sin dag. Fattar han tycke för en ung kvinna, skyr han exempelvis icke att förvandla sig till hennes fästman, och den verklige fästmannens svartsjuka mot sin trolske dubbelgångare har i sådana fall kommit mycket ondt åstad. Stundom har det dock händt, att Bäckahästen själf råkat illa ut. En orädd bonde spände honom en gång för sin harf och hade mycken nytta af hans jättelika kroppskrafter. Slutligen lät bonden emellertid beveka sig till dumheten att föra den stånkande Bäckahästen ned till ett vatten, och då försvann han genast samt hämnade sig grymt på bonden för dessa förödmjukande dagsverken. Alldeles bortsedt från det allmänt opassande i att använda trollen i åkerbrukets tjänst, finner jag emellertid, att ett enstaka drag sådant som detta strider mot Bäckahästens trots allt verkligt storslagna och kungliga väsen. Med självskrifven myndighet råder han öfver åar och vattendrag, och delvis torde Bäckahästen motsvara Näcken eller Strömkarlen, ehuru han till sin natur är mera tungskodd och mindre elegisk samt enligt alla vittnesbörd föga musikalisk.

Möjligt är, att den skepnad Bäckahästen i det följande äger, något afviker från den gängse folkuppfattningen om honom, liksom styckets fabel är fullständigt diktad. Härtill vill jag dock andraga dels Bäckahästens omnämnda förmåga att ikläda sig skiftande hamnar, dels -- och ypperst -- mina egna ögons vittnesbörd.

Jag har nämligen själf sett honom. En månskensnatt vid en viss bäck i Vemmenhögs härad har jag som tolfåring sett en snabb skymt af den mäktige och nära nog sprungit andan ur halsen på mig för hans skull. Hans uppsyn var blekare än den vildkummin, som ännu i denna dag frodas vid sagda bäcks stränder, och just som jag i det följande beskrifvit honom, såg han den gången ut -- halft gubbe och halft häst, en kentaur, en skånsk Nessus, skulle jag vilja säga. Om hans existens, som ju dock är hufvudsaken, råder sålunda intet tvifvel. Han dör icke förrän den sista rännilen sinat ut i gröngräset.[29]

The play itself has all of the roguish playfulness of these prefatory paragraphs; the strange adventures of the hard-headed, upright peasant Kristoffer in the hands of the mortally offended bäckahäst, together with the accusing court of birds and animals and flowers of the prairie countryside, range from light pathos to the uproariously ridiculous. But the little play contains

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[29]Bäckahästen: skånskt sagospel i fyra upptåg (Stockholm, 1909), pp. 5-7.

much more than mere poetic horse-play. It is an effort, the poet himself assures us in these same prefatory pages, to reproduce in the mind of the reader something of the immediate reverence which the glimpse of Bäckahästen had many years before brought to the twelve year old lad and to recreate a typical Skånsk summer night in all its broad and substantial stämningsliv.

> Om något af den obetingade vördnad, Bäckahästen vid detta tillfälle injagade i pågens hjärta, äfven kommer till synes i mannens dikt, skall detta vara mig nog. Det är den skånska sommarnatten i allt dess breda och substantiella stämingsliv jag i hans tecken har velat hylla.[30]

To this end Österling depends, as one might expect in an essentially lyric poet, largely upon lyrical descriptive passages and interspersed songs. The first part ("Första upptåget") of Bäckahästen, for example, draws to a quiet close with the words:

> Nu hör man åter endast bäcken och rågsuset, en sömnig musik under de bleka sommarstjärnorna, då och då afbruten af det svaga knarrandet i gårdens virke efter dagens solhetta, men äfven härtill skall man lägga märke, ty det är:
>
> Gårdens sång.

And then the song, a poetic apotheosis of the old Skånsk bondgård, follows --

> Mig lyster språka med de kloka stjärnorna,
> när nu min famn omsider ligger tom --
> att rätt förstå de sista mänskohjärnorna
> förmenas gården på dess ålderdom.
>
> Hvar äro mannarna med vadmalshuorna,
> som lyftes vördnadsfullt i denna natt,
> hvars helg man firade med stånk i stuorna,
> där yfvig flygrönn under loften satt?
>
> Hvar äro kvinnorna med silfvermaljorna
> på breda brösts andäktiga behag --
> de ägde sötman af de gröna baljorna
> i vickesängarna en sommardag!
>
> Mitt lif är hos de gamla under vårdarna,
> jag är den mossigt svala dödens vän,
> jag är den äldsta af de hvita gårdarna
> i detta härad, som jag pryder än.

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[30] Ibid., p. 7.

Som ängsligt spröda fågelpip från liderna
de förr så höga låtarna jag hör --
det fromma hjärtat från de gröna tiderna
med mina bjälkar multnar ned och dör!

This song has much of that "breda och substantiella stämningsliv" which Österling speaks of as so characteristic of a summer night on skånska slätten. More light, more ethereal, however, are many of the songs in Bäckahästen, particularly the songs of the trees and flowers and birds and insects that follow one another in such rapid succession in "Andra upptåget." Very typical of these songs is that of "Pilträden" (the willow tree), with its quiet enjoyment of the summer sun and southern winds and its gentle appreciation of the friendly sympathy of bäckahästen in more blustery times:

Junigröna, silfverludna
stå vi nu i solens vård,
gnolande för fjärranbjudna
sunnanvindar vårt ackord!

Dock vi minnas krymplingstiden
när vi stöplade med stål,
bara kvedo en förvriden,
vintrig våndas tungomål.

Ack, när första grodan kväkte
i en blek och vattnig vår,
Bäckahäst, hur blidt du läkte
våra oförskyllda sår!

Af hans källors språng vi suga
lummig styrkas hälsovin,
och som tack för allt vi buga
samman oss till baldakin.

Skall den gamle illa tycka,
vid en smekning föga van,
om i smyg vi stilla trycka
kyssar i hans skumgrå man?

"Andra upptåget" is perhaps richest in such a lyric vein as this, though the last two are not lacking in it. These songs and lyric sketches move together ultimately in a vast and complex but ever more perfect harmony until they seem to swell into one magnificent hymn to the spirit of the midsummer night on the Skånsk prairie. It is perhaps going a bit far in one's praise to mention Österling's Bäckahästen in the same breath with Shakespeare's

Midsummer Night's Dream, as Böök does in his review of the Swedish poet's lyrical folk play; but at least one can understand why such a parallel was momentarily drawn. Oehlenschläger's Sankt-Hans-aftenspil is a much closer parallel, and Atterbom's example probably had much to do with Österling's use of the personfication of flowers and trees.[31] Our Swedish critic, however, is not overstating his praise much when he writes:

> Dessa upptåg, som bindas samman icke mindre genom bäcken, hvars ackompanjerande brus flyter genom alla scenerna, än genom den enkla handlingen, bilda tillsammans en rik och lefvande hymn öfver midsommarnattens skönhet. Helgaftonsstämningen öfver bondgården med stampande hästar och råmande kor, den daggiga skogsdälden i stjärnskimret, den nattliga dansens kärleksmättade luft, gryningsstundens köldskakning och morgonens befriande och solfyllda klarhet, landskap och människor och djur -- allt är med i detta lyriska panorama, allt får ord och melodi och klingar samman till ett stort och rent ackord. Detta sagospel är till brädden fylldt af den lyckliga och rika andaktsstämning, som skalden låter syrsorna uttrycka:
>
> Ingen lofsång den försumme,
> som är kär i dagg och ljus,
> arm är blott den evigt stumme
> i sin mödas fångahus![32]

The fanciful general conception of this lyric-dramatic allegory of Österling's might lead some to maintain that it represents a radical departure from the strain of poetic realism that we have found so characteristic of Årets visor. Such a conclusion, though it contains some truth, would disregard a great many features that are common to both Bäckahästen and Årets visor. First of all, they are both inspired by the same spontaneous ac-

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[31]See Böök, op. cit., pp. 46-47, for a rather suggestive paragraph on the whole question of possible sources for Bäckahästen. The probable Atterbom source Böök does not mention, nor does he Johannes Alfvén's Byrrethe Byrrisdotter (1905), a little folk play dealing with southern Swedish legendary lore that Österling reviewed with considerable interest and sympathy in Sv. Dagbl., December 24, 1905. This latter, it would seem, though hardly in a class with the great folk plays of tradition, may possibly have been the immediate occasion for Österling's preoccupation with the genre as applied directly to Skånsk folk legend.

[32]Böök, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

ceptance of life, especially of life close to nature, as a positive value. In the second place, they are alike in their immediate response to the simple, commonplace objects of everyday life, particularly those aspects of this life close to hembygden and its folk customs. And finally, the very language of the two volumes -- an unadorned language for the most part, close to the soil -- is similar; in fact in this regard Bäckahästen may be said even to represent an advance over Årets visor, for Österling attempts in Bäckahästen for the first time (and, it must be added, for the last) an experiment in dialect. The experiment is a timid one, indeed, one in which certain Skånsk words are used, according to the poet's own testimony to me, "bara att ge det Bäckahästen en lätt färg av dialekt"; but evenso this experiment in dialect, with its use of a broad, heavy, locally colored Skånsk vocabulary, must certainly be considered a further step in the direction of poetic realism.

None of the critics whom I have had occasion to read give any attention to the problem of the allegory (what Österling in his prefatory note calls "fabeln") in Bäckahästen, and this despite the fact that in this allegory lies the meaning of the play insofar as the poet insists upon it having any meaning. Though the allegory in itself may not have any particular significance, it does seem to have some importance as an indication of Österling's attitude toward life at this time, and as such it should be given some attention here. The allegorical meaning of Bäckahästen is to be found in the apparently antipathetic juxtaposition between substantial peasant Kristoffer, representing the practical-minded, non-imaginative peasant mind, and bäckahästen, the personification of the spirit of nature and of beauty, all that is implied in the variegated imaginative register of stäm-

ningslivet on the prairie. The horse-play to which the worthy Kristoffer is committed by the offended bäckahäst is merely a just punishment for his disregard of the spirit of nature which should reign supreme over the prairie countryside. Bäckahästen is finally propitiated only when Kristoffer, upon his return to the farm-yard, degraded and weary after the escapades of the night, reveals a change of heart by an act of unexpected kindness to a brook trout tossing helplessly out of its element in the grass along the shore of the brook.

Kristoffer.

Hvad ser jag i gräset för lekande glitter?
En fisk -- med de finaste rosende fjäll --
sköljd upp ur det våta -- och död? Nej, den spritter --
Seså, var du lugn, lilla ädla forell!
Jag ger dig åt lifvet, du slipper med skräcken,
min hand gör dig inte det minsta förnär.
Hvad vill du på jorden, du åbo af bäcken,
blif kvar i ditt hem! Där är bättre än här --

Han släpper med skygg aktsamhet åter ut forellen i vattnet, och genom vattenstänket höres nu för sista gången, aflägsen, gemytlig och välvillig:

Bäckahästens röst.

Den gärningen, bonde, var skön,
farväl, jag är blidkad, farväl,
men bara en människas bön
kan fria en människas själ!
Ty själf inte nämna jag kan
det väldiga namnet, min vän,
som löser ditt nattliga bann
och ger dig åt lifvet igen!

A minor incident or two then follows, involving Kristoffer's reconciliation with his wife and daughter, and the little play comes to a close with a clear-cut statement of the allegorical meaning of it all in

Bäckens sång.

Mitt vattensus
för bondens hus
med munter lärdom strömmar,
att inte blott han räkne med
den mull, som är hans bröd och fred,

men ock det strandlöst blånande, det trolska
böljeslag,
som alltid rullar tätt bakom den trygga
världens dag
och vaggan är för evigt friska drömmar.

The fable represents thus a plea for a more humanely imaginative response to life than Kristoffer had from the beginning maintained. Bäckahästen in this respect provides what might be considered something of a modification of the type of poetic realism, with its emphasis upon the commonplace and the experiences of everyday life, that is characteristic of Årets visor, though the modification is so slight that it might well be considered merely a difference in emphasis. The implication of Kristoffer's rapid conversion might well be that the practical-minded and the imaginative responses to life are not so far apart as to be considered strictly antipathetic; both are essentially human at base, merely two sides of the same being, and the problem, therefore, is merely to bring about a proper adjustment between the two.

iii.

The unity of impression that Österling manages to gain in Bäckahästen is quite lacking in Blommande träd (1910). There is nothing that gives to this new volume a central effect, neither its tone, nor its technique, nor its subject matter or point of view. In tone it ranges from the almost hopeless melancholy of Preludier (see "Sjöarnas sjö," "Grå musik," and "Drömresan") to the rollicking spontaneity of Årets visor (see "Över berg och dal," "Vårskymningen," and "Vandringsvisa i oktober"). In matters of verse structure it experiments with a striking variety of things: odes and eclogues in various metres and stanzaic lengths, fantastic arabesques quite unusual in Swedish lyric poetry, simple little lyrics of one or two short stanzas, and an occasional son-

net-like thing in the manner of Årets visor. In subject matter, hembygden and nature in the more general sense are perhaps central, though other subjects, especially that of love, now enter quite consistently and serve to break further the unity of impression that characterized Årets visor and Bäckahästen. On the whole, the impression one gets from Blommande träd is one of a rich variety of things rather imperfectly realized. Årets visor and Bäckahästen, in their severer concentration in matters of form and subject matter, leave the reader with the feeling of a more finished product.

The poems in Blommande träd dealing directly with hembygden, the folk and customs of Skåne, lack for the most part the immediate spontaneous objectivity of those pieces dealing with the same theme in Årets visor. They are, on the whole, more quiet and meditative in manner, sometimes being merely stämningsdikter reminiscent of Ola Hansson or Vilhelm Ekelund, but more often providing a meditative approach in a more profound and original vein. As in Årets visor, both the sea coast (see "Städerna vid sundet" and "Strandvinter") and the broad stretches of Skånsk prairieland (see "Och tröskarna tego") are treated with loving affection. Unlike in Årets visor, however, Österling does not restrict his landscape in this new volume to the flat stretches of southern Skåne (the section known locally as söderslätten); in several of the pieces in Blommande träd, notably in "Arabesk över sommaren," the poet is obviously describing the more hilly landscape of northwestern Skåne, the region dominated by the famous Kullen peninsula.

For the most part, however, it is still söderslätten upon which our poet centres the attention of his hembygdsdiktning. But much less even than in Årets visor is he here concerned with mere

description of landscape. The tendency which we have noted in the earlier volume to make man the centre of his hembygdsdiktning is carried out even more rigidly in Blommande träd, though now it is done in a somewhat different manner. The realistic objectivity prevailingly characteristic of Årets visor has now given way to a more mellow reflective vein, half mere stämning, half philosophic, which quite naturally in the case of a temperament like Österling's would further tend to emphasize the human element in the traditional hembygd. For the spontaneous immediacy of response to environment which we have found in the earlier volume there is now substituted a quiet, meditative vein in which the objects of the poet's observation seem more distant in time and place and in which the poetic conception seems more warmly mature, more convincing, more profound. One is led, indeed, inevitably to the observation that here for the first time in any significant sense our Swedish poet is beginning to realize to some extent in his poetic practice the famous definition of poetry propounded by Wordsworth -- "poetry is emotion recollected in tranquility." "Lärkan," somewhat reminiscent, perhaps, of Vilhelm Ekelund, is a little piece dealing with man and his relation to the prairie countryside in a strain of almost pure stämning, quite devoid of any reflective vein. But in most of the other poems with a similar theme in this volume, particularly in such characteristic pieces as "Juldansen," "Släkten," and "Forngraven," the more deliberate reflective vein is the dominant note even though the immediate emotional associative values identifiable with stämning are not necessarily wanting.

That our poet can make, as in the case of "Juldansen," an essentially reflective poem out of the materials of a peasant dance is sufficiently indicative of the depth of the reflective

vein in Österling. No better illustration of the originality of this manner, at least insofar as Swedish lyric poetry is concerned, could be offered than to contrast Österling's "Juldansen" with such thoroughly uppsvensk treatments of a similar theme as Fröding's "Det var dans bort i vägen..." and Karlfeldt's "Se Svarta Rudolf dansar." Both of these latter pieces are filled with the violent northern rhythms of a peasant dance, though in "Det var dans bort i vägen..." the poem closes in a gently idyllic vein full of the moonlit mystery of the Värmländsk countryside, while over "Svarta Rudolf" hovers always the sultry eroticism of far distant exotic coasts. How different the stately movement of Österling's "Juldansen"!

Stakarnas ljussken från lantliga gillen
fladdra ännu i min svärmande håg,
fint och kruserligt i gamla kadrillen
hembygdens döttrar dansa jag såg.

Döttrar av gårdarna, döttrar av trakten
buro de slättens rytm i var lem,
långlig och landfast vila i takten,
minnet av markerna kring deras hem!

Ännu ej skuggad av myrtenkransen,
ännu ej hårdnad av kistkammarvett
mången prinsesslik panna i dansen
sken emot stakarnas ljusasett.

Hjärtan som marssol i knoppande häckar,
hjärtan som kärlekens långmod förstå,
kvinnovårar med klingande bäckar
djupt under kälen och upp i det blå!

Den som de bära i hemliga tankar,
rotas i mullens välsignande ro,
hustruflickornas längtan sig rankar
humlegrön över byarnas bo.

Stod jag på tröskeln, smugen ur balen,
kände jag slättens och dansernas vind
ute i kvällskumma förstusvalen
stryka med tafatt smekning min kind.

The poet here has captured in the very rhythm of his lines the dignified bearing of "gamla kadrillen," identifying its spirit intimately with the quiet, aristocratic dignity of the gently rolling prairie-land of Skåne which spreads out in the distance --

Döttrar av gårdarna, döttrar av trakten
buro de slättens rytm i var lem,
långlig och landfast vila i takten,
minnet av markerna kring deras hem!

And out of the quiet dignity of this occasion the poet has found the materials which evoke in him the lesson of a universal human value --

Mitt i den ödsliga vintern jag kände
värme från eldar, som ej kunna dö,
högtid som dold under dagens elände
blommar likt julens rosor i snö.

Strängar, dem rösten ej söndersmular,
klungo i mig efter dansernas takt,
slättens sångmö i dansande jular
dröjde osynlig vid gården på vakt.

It is, perhaps, just such a value as this that Österling had in mind when he at one time referred to Wordsworth's "brittiskt breda universalitet"; at any rate the reflective strain in these last two stanzas, as well as the tone of quiet reminiscence, reminds one very strongly of Wordsworth's manner of closing a poem based on reminiscence, as for example in his "Daffodils."

The reflective vein is even more marked in "Släkten" and "Forngraven." In these two poems it is the conception of time, in the historical sense, that grips the poet and leads him to his conclusions on the subject of man, particularly the mortality of man as it relates itself to the fortunes of the race. In "Släkten" Österling employs a direct, realistic vocabulary and a severe, almost crude, simplicity of line that reminds at times of Bååth's imitations of the ancient saga style.

Över åkern bak sin plog
skrider bondefar.
Möda nog och gröda nog,
tak för det som var!
Axen, när hans sol går ned,
susa hans beröm.
Sonen går i nästa led
samma väg i dröm.
Ser vad ej den gamle såg:
mullens djupa liv.

Älskar i sin veka håg
bygden som sitt viv.
Söckenluft och månedis
vävas, varv på varv.
Aldrig blir den ene vis
av den andres arv.
Led vid led de sluta till
ned i gravens ro.
Snart historiens sigill
präglar by och bo.
Far och son och son och far,
ingen lika ser.
Stilla ligger slätten kvar,
ger och ger.

Generation follows generation, closely united though little understanding each other oftentimes, in an eternal circle as inevitably as the seasons; the only thing, it seems, that has any real permanence is the prairie itself --

Stilla ligger slätten kvar,
ger och ger.

Österling returns to this theme of man in his relation to slätten on various occasions later, most notably in "Hemmanet" in Jordens heder (1927), though in these later pieces his reflective vein has led him to somewhat more constructive conclusions, possibly at this later date under the influence of Wordsworth. "Släkten" is hardly negative in tone, but it certainly is in its ultimate implications; its conception of the impermanence of man and the contrasting permanence of slätten is similar to that of Hardy in such a novel as The Return of the Native.[33] "Forngraven," though similar in theme to "Släkten," is warmly idyllic in its whole manner, intoned in a softly flexible freedom of rhythm which reveals Österling at his best as a technician in verse --

Sova de döda

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[33]I do not mean to suggest that there is a Hardy influence here. Österling ultimately does become an enthusiastic admirer of the English novelist, collaborating with a number of other Swedish poets in a selection of translations from Hardy's poetry (see Thomas Hardy: lyrisk urval i svensk tolkning, [Stockholm, 1928]), but this interest came much later.

i hällekista,
vallmor förblöda
ett solvarvs sista.
Sova de döda, där axtung gröda
susar från strand och till strand.
Ingen förtäljer
de jordades drömmar,
ingen säljer
det liv, som strömmar
i lieförande, idog hand.
Sova de döda i främmande land.

Dem lystes väg av svärdsblått sken
till gravens mossiga tröskelsten
och trappan till Valhalla.
Grönska nu sömn över alla!
Gräs över urnor och ben.
Men liarna vina
i vetet, och bina
svärma mot himmel och hav.
Skördar falla, och ättelängder
bortdö fredligt i lummiga ängder.
Glömd står i gräset en grav.

Death, the eternal fate of man, is looked upon here as beautifully peaceful ("ättelängder bortdö fredligt"), especially the rest after death amidst the harvest plenty of the summer country-side and in sight of the distant skies and the open sea. In both "Släkten" and "Forngraven" man is not viewed directly in his immediate social environment; he has become a link in the eternal processes of nature, and as such he attains a certain dignity that might not otherwise be apparent. In fact, with only two exceptions ("Slättens huldra" and "Den väntande"), Blommande träd is remarkably free of poems dealing with direct social pathos.[34] Österling has now learned to sublimate his treatment of human beings, giving to them a place in the universal scheme of things; and in this regard he has taken a long step in the direction of the more philo-

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[34]A fairly good case might be made out for an indebtedness to Wordsworth in each of these poems. "Slättens huldra" has certain strong resemblances to "A solitary reaper," particularly in situation and theme; and "Den väntande" reminds one strongly of "The forsaken" and poems with a similar theme so numerous in Wordsworth's early production. Fröding's "Säv, säv, susa" also might have inspired certain details in "Den väntande"; the tone of Österling's last stanza is similar to that in Fröding's poem.

sophic view of man that he is to develop later in Idyllernas bok (1917) and the volumes which follow down through Tonen från havet (1933).

This meditative strain, bordering on the philosophical, so characteristic of the poems dealing with hembygden in Blommande träd, carries over into the pieces that treat the more general theme of nature in itself independent of the peasant, his traditions and customs. A number of poems on nature in this volume, notably "Eklog under blommande kastanj," "Trädgården mörknar," "Trädens sus," and "Arabesk över sommaren," are merely stämningsdikter for the most part in the traditional manner of Ola Hansson and Vilhelm Ekelund; but there are a number of others that are indicative of certain advances in Österling's whole conception of nature.[35] A little piece like "Sångens skog," for example, reveals that the poet has definite skepticisms as to the ultimate possibilities of nature in bringing healing to the human soul. This is perhaps a relatively unimportant poem, however, and its symbolism is somewhat ambiguous. Several other poems in Blommande träd seem more significant.

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[35]Docent Olle Holmberg, of Lund, Sweden, has called my attention to a possible influence of Ola Hansson upon the figurative language of "Trädgården mörknar." The passages in question might be quoted:

Hembygd du är	Ah, ni dårande
som en älskande kvinna	kantilener
ren och skär	födda i halvsömn
som den jag vill vinna.	under syrener!
Ögonen sluter jag,	Natten känner jag
huvudet lutar jag,	dofta och brinna,
mot dina knän. Att leva	över mig sjunken
mig lär!	som en kvinna.

Hansson's lines, the first of these, are from "Hembygdsvisor, 3" in Notturno (1885). See Samlade skrifter (Stockholm, 1921), I, 159. There is, indeed, a certain similarity between the two passages, though how far one could carry the hypothesis of a direct influence here is problemmatical. In any case, the whole question here is one of detail and one that has no very great importance.

Already in the prefatory stanzas of this volume we come upon a suggestion of a conception of nature which is not wholly idyllic or optimistic. The stanzas deal in general with the relation between art and nature, art, in its longing for beauty, being looked upon as something which reflects essentially the joy in life associated with nature in her happier forms.

> Ack, skönhetsviljan är en evig vår,
> med friska munnar talar den till livet,
> och solen kröner sångens lösta hår.

And yet nature herself, it seems, is not all joy and goodness --

> Det ljusa underverket fläcklöst skiner,
> men upp i blommans fina ådror går
> en doft av mullens mörkerjästa viner.

What does the poet mean by the rather cryptic phrase "mullens mörkerjästa viner"? The little poem "Naturbön," which appears immediately after these prefatory stanzas in Blommande träd, may throw some light on the subject.

> Natur, din leende ovanvärld
> är den förmera än rötternas mull,
> som hårt av de trälande armarna snärd
> försakar ljuset för kronornas skull?
> Nej, låt mig vörda
> i lika mån
> den blomsteralf, som är solarnas son,
> och djupets djurhamn, som lyfter hans börda!
> Två äro drömlanden. Hör jag ej brus
> av väldiga syskonlunder:
> den vakna, bekrönt av Uranias ljus,
> den mörkerdaggiga, blinda därunder.

The meaning of these lines also is somewhat ambiguous, it must be admitted, making impossible any very exact interpretation of the poem; but it would seem that Österling is suggesting that inasmuch as all aspects of nature are not indicative of light and joy, but at least to some extent dark and blind, perhaps some of them are partially evil or purposeless.[36] In any case, it is clear that

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[36]It might be worth recording that at least one Swedish scholar, Gunnar Castrén, agrees with me in this interpretation; in fact he is willing to go farther than I in stressing the nega-

Österling's picture of nature here is not wholly idyllic; for he does draw a marked distinction between nature's "leende ovanvärld" and "den mörkerdaggiga, blinda därunder," and he insists that each must be a part of any complete poetic conception of nature. Such a conception as this is one that Wordsworth should not have been apt to insist upon, for to Wordsworth nature was almost always good; but since Wordsworth's day modern science had revealed aspects of nature and her governing laws (one phase of which Tennyson has summed up in the phrase "nature red in tooth and claw") that were not a part of the average Romantic's conception.

Despite this point of difference with Wordsworth, however, it seems that Österling on the whole follows the English poet quite closely in most of the poems dealing with nature in Blommande träd. As in Wordsworth many of the poems in this volume deal with certain single phenomena of nature, particularly with trees, as the title of the volume would suggest, though for the most part the actual manner of treatment in these poems is hardly that of Wordsworth. They are merely the traditional Swedish stämningsdikter, with little or no effort to develop their themes in the more profound philosophic spirit which we associate with Wordsworth's most characteristic pieces. But Blommande träd contains at least two poems, "Till minne av ett träd" and "Vid betraktandet av ett rågax," in which the Wordsworth strain is apparent not only in the choice of subject matter but also in the whole manner of approach to the subject.[37] Those poems in this

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tive implications of Österling's lines in "Naturbön," though he insists, and quite rightly, that this is a temporary strain only in the Swedish poet. See Schück och Warburg, Illustrerad svensk litteraturhistoria (3je. uppl.; Stockholm, 1932), VII, 453-54.

[37] Swedish critics have often singled out these two poems as being cases of an undoubted indebtedness to Wordsworth. See Fredrik Böök, Resa kring svenska Parnassen, p. 156, and Hans Dhejne, "Från Preludier till Tonen från havet," Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten, April 8, 1934, et al.

volume to which I have referred as merely stämningsdikter provide only a sensitively emotional response to given natural phenomena, never attaining to the expression of any profounder "meanings" in the relation between the phenomena observed and the spirit felt in the process of observation. But in the two poems to which I have called special attention Österling goes much farther: the poetic imagination here is not merely in a state of emotional passivity -- it is reflectively active; it senses clearly certain intimate inner relationships between phenomena and spirit; it unites observation and feeling not only to each other but to the larger world of thought and volition in which the object becomes a part of the whole universal scheme of things. These poems are thus reflective poems in the ultimate sense of the word; they are "philosophical poems," if the term is not an anachronism.

The point of departure for the poet's reflection in "Vid betraktandet av ett rågax" is but a single ear of rye, and yet out of his quiet reflection over such a simple natural phenomenon grows a universal understanding of physical phenomena in general and a universal sympathy for all living life.

> Ja, att se på ett ax och fördjupa sig i
> allt det yviga liv, som man nyss gick förbi,
> att förnimma de väldiga rågarnas blund
> som en svallning i blodet, lycksalig och sund!
> Det är ädlaste heder, oss jorden beter,
> det är undret, som störst i det tystaste sker,
> det är kransen, som tryckes osynligt och svalt
> över dem, som naturen till älskare valt.
> Du kan söka förspillt både länge och väl
> genom vägarnas damm efter sommarens själ,
> men om stilla du står hos ett gult litet ax,
> blir du stundom delaktig av sommaren strax.
> Du blir stark av en kärlek, som grenar sig ned
> genom lummiga världens jungfruliga fred,
> och som åbo i byn går du hemåt igen,
> som de mörkblå cyanernas leende vän.
> Och din skugga förlängd genom rågarnas rök
> gör hos solbleka längor sitt aftonbesök,
> och du somnar så tryggt, som om åker och äng
> stode milsvitt på vakt vid din lantliga säng.

This is convincing pantheism in the reflective vein, infinitely

beyond the rather crude theoretical emphasis upon "livet" that characterized Österling's earlier efforts to spell out the meaning of nature and man's relation to it. Emotion and reflection are subtly blended here, and the result is a poetic conception of universal significance. In nature poetry Österling had never hitherto attained such perfection of form and sentiment and thought; in fact, it is a serious question as to whether he ever reaches these heights even later. In this regard the poem might be said to occupy about the same position in Österling's production as does "Tintern Abbey" in that of Wordsworth; both poems are written at that hour in each poet's development when the elements of fresh feeling and mature reflection meet in a perfect fusion. After "Tintern Abbey" the strain of reflection begins to predominate in Wordsworth at the expense of the spontaneous emotional response to phenomena, and the result is not always happy. The same might be said of Österling. Even though his later nature poetry as a whole is more significant than is that of his earlier volumes up through Blommande träd, it is doubtful as to whether he again reaches quite the peak in a single poem that he does in "Vid betraktandet av ett rågax."

Many are the sources from which Österling might have drawn the pantheistic conception that dominates this piece. We have already called attention to its possible relation to the nature poetry of Francis Jammes.[38] Another specific source may have been Japanese poetry, translations from which had early fascinated Österling.[39] Atterbom, Österling's countryman of the early nineteenth century, is also a possible source. The truth of the

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[38] See supra, pp. 146-47. (This reference is to the complete dissertation, on file only in the University of Chicago Libraries.)

[39] See Människor och landskap, p. 141

matter is, of course, that such a conception of nature as is present in "Vid betraktandet av ett rågax" is implicit, if not actual, in the nature poetry of nearly all ages and all countries, though it seems most intimately a part of that period in literary history commonly known as "the Romantic Movement," particularly that of England in the early years of the nineteenth century. Österling's enthusiasm for the English Romantics is well known, and therefore it would seem reasonable to assume that it was here that he came upon the formative ideas which led to such a poem as "Vid betraktandet av ett rågax." He might have found in almost any of the English Romantics whom he was reading during these years a justification of the primary place of the poetic imagination as an interpretative agent, a means of arriving at essential truth; though it would seem reasonable, especially in view of the particular subject matter and tone of "Vid betraktandet av ett rågax," that Wordsworth was the ultimate source of this conception.[40]

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to trace the ideas in Österling's piece to any particular poem in Wordsworth, for they are to be found everywhere in the English poet's early verse. My guess is that certain passages in the Prelude, particularly Books I, II, IV, XII, and XIII, together with such poems as "Lines written in early spring," "Expostulation and reply," "To my sister," "How sweet it is, when mother Fancy rocks," and "Tintern Abbey," were largely responsible for the mood as well as the ideas of "Vid betraktandet av ett rågax." In "How sweet it

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[40]A rather illuminating general analysis of the conception of the imagination as developed among the English Romantics is to be found in the Introduction to the collection of Critical essays of the early nineteenth century, edited by Raymond M. Alden (New York, 1921), pp. x-xvi.

is..." Wordsworth speaks of the intimate and profound way in which natural phenomena affect him as he wanders quietly "through a wood" --

> Verily I think,
> Such place to me is sometimes like a dream
> Or map of the whole world: thoughts, link by link,
> Enter through ears and eyesight, with such gleam
> Of all things, that at last in fear I shrink,
> And leap at once from the delicious stream.

And in a more majestic and serious mood in the Prelude he speaks of having had such sensations of the essential oneness of things already in his childhood --

> even then I felt
> Gleams like the flashing of a shield;-- the earth
> And common face of Nature spake to me
> Rememberable things... Book I

These "rememberable things," these "gleams like the flashing of a shield" (Österling refers to this phrase in one of his important essays on Wordsworth) are clearly of a piece with the general pantheistic implications of Österling's poem. More specifically, two parallels might be pointed out. The idea of quiet, reflective passivity to natural phenomena in Österling's lines --

> Du kan söka förspillt både länge och väl
> genom vägarnas damm efter sommarens själ,
> men om stilla du står hos ett gult litet ax,
> blir du stundom delaktig av sommaren strax --

finds a rather close parallel in Wordsworth's "Expostulation and reply"--

> "The eye -- it cannot choose but see;
> We cannot bid the ear be still;
> Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
> Against or with our will.
>
> "Nor less I deem that there are Powers
> Which of themselves our minds impress;
> That we can feed this mind of ours
> In a wise passiveness.

And the spirit of universal understanding, sympathy, and love for all that is, which grows out of the general imaginative identification of all phenomena and dominates the closing lines --

Du blir stark av en kärlek, som grenar sig ned
genom lummiga världens jungfruliga fred,
och som åbo i byn går du hemåt igen,
som de mörkblå cyanernas leende vän.
Och din skugga förlängd genom rågarnas rök
gör hos solbleka längor sitt aftonbesök,
och du somnar så tryggt, som om åker och äng
stode milsvitt på vakt vid din lantliga säng --

is anticipated, similarly in the closing lines, in Wordsworth's "To my sister" --

Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth:
--It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason:
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey:
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls:
They shall be tuned to love.

Though "Till minne av ett träd," the other reflective poem which marks a distinct advance in Österling over the stämningsdikter so characteristic of his earlier nature poetry, hardly contains the thoroughgoing pantheism of "Vid betraktandet av ett rågax," it is in other respects, at least, just as clearly reminiscent of Wordsworth. The very title reminds strikingly of Wordsworth -- "To a small celandine," "To the daisy," "Yewtrees," "The haunted tree," and scores of other titles from the English poet immediately suggest themselves. And more important, the whole reflective vein in which Österling's poem is conceived -- with its simple stateliness of movement, its conception of the magnificent old elm as having a conscious life of its own, and the gentle moral drawn from all this -- is that of Wordsworth.

Väl hundra långa år av sus

din krona växte här
och var ett gammalt gästfritt hus
för miltrött resenär.
Mot blåa land din gröna rund
steg upp ur vägens damm,
och bonden såg i mörkrets stund
din skepnad brusa fram.
Här blåste vinden full musik,
här sjöngo fågelsträck,
här blev din levnad minnesrik
på en och samma fläck.

Du såg de hundra årens korn
omkring dig mejas av,
du mindes diligensens horn
och döda hästars trav.
När fordon av förgängligt gods
dig rullade förbi,
du stod där lik en prövad lots,
som visste mer än vi.
Och ensam synlig vitt omkring
du blev, som tiden gick,
ett tecken och ett märkesting
för tvenne socknars blick.

Du höggs. Men kvar din stubbe står
med vacker cirkelskrift,
en ring för varje lummigt år
av vördnadsvärd bedrift.
Så gav du glädje mer än nog,
så blev det enkla stort,
så kom du till en stilla skog
bak paradisets port.
Och dröj på stället, vandringsman,
när kvällen bryter på,
att almens sus du höra kan
ur himlagläntans blå!

Wordsworth's "Yew-trees" has in it much of that sense of permanence, oftentimes associated with such old landmarks on the horizon as ancient trees as contrasted to the fleeting life of man, that breathes quietly through the lines of "Till minne av ett träd"; and that intimate sense of a communion between natural objects and man ("some concord with humanity") which is central in Österling's poem is oftentimes present in the English poet, most markedly, perhaps, in one of his pieces dedicated "To the daisy."

Bright Flower! whose home is everywhere
Bold in maternal Nature's care,
And all the long year through the heir
    Of joy or sorrow;
Methinks that there abides in thee
Some concord with humanity,

Given to no other flower I see
    The forest thorough!

Is it that Man is soon deprest?
A thoughtless Thing! who, once unblest,
Does little on his memory rest,
    Or on his reason,
And Thou woulds't teach him how to find
A shelter under every wind,
A hope for times that are unkind
    And every season?

Thou wander'st the wide world about,
Unchecked by pride or scrupulous doubt,
With friends to greet thee, or without,
    Yet pleased and willing;
Meek, yielding to the occasion's call,
And all things suffering from all
Thy function apostolical
    In peace fulfilling.

The Swedish poet might also have come upon such a conception as this, though given more general philosophical formulation, in certain lines from Book III of The Prelude --

But peace! enough
Here to record that I was mounting now
To such community with highest truth --
A track pursuing, not untrod before,
From strict analogies by thought supplied
Or consciousness not to be subdued.
To every natural form, rock, fruits, or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I beheld respired with inward meaning....

In any case, whichever the specific poem, or poems, in Wordsworth from which Österling may have drawn the ideas contained in the two pieces, "Vid betraktandet av ett rågax" and "Till minne av ett träd," I think there can be little doubt that Wordsworth is the primary source of the pantheism that lies at the basis of his two poems. It is quite possible, of course, and certainly not inconsistent with my theory, that other poets, particularly perhaps Francis Jammes and Kai Hoffmann, might have contributed to some extent.

The quiet reflective strain so characteristic of the best

pieces dealing with hembygden and nature in Blommande träd is quite often rather rudely disturbed in these pages by a new note in Österling, the note of restless, intensely strained, tragic love. The poet's conception of woman seems by this time to have become more real. No longer is she the idyllic maiden, or the romantically intense symbol of beauty, or merely the maternal ideal of his earlier poems; she has become in certain of the poems in Blommande träd the intensely passionate creature, instinct with immediately cruel destinies for man and for herself, a creature often tragically overwhelmed by the dark and fatal intensities of her own nature. The subconscious inevitability of love, blind, perhaps even purposeless, certainly often tragic in its consequences, is here given vivid expression for the first time in Österling's poetry. We have seen that pure idyllicism is no longer possible for our Swedish poet in his treatment of nature; no more is it in his handling of the themes of woman and of love. It is very probable that there is a close relationship between the shift in each case. My feeling is that it is Österling's own growing consciousness of the sex problem in his own experience that is the real point of departure in his partial reaction against the idyllic in both nature poetry and the poetry of love. Such a poem as "Sångens skog" would seem to suggest this, as well as the very intensity of the poetic conception in a piece like "Purpurfågeln"; and if any more evidence is necessary the whole volume Facklor i stormen (1913), dealing primarily with the theme of frustrated love, might be cited.[41]

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[41]Though Facklor i stormen was published in 1913, three years after Blommande träd, the broken engagement, which, it is well known, was responsible for most of the poems on love in the volume, occurred in the fall of 1911. How much earlier Österling had known the woman in question I do not know, nor, of course, do I know the details regarding the course of the poet's courtship.

Whatever the point of departure may have been, the importance of the theme of love in Blommande träd is undeniable. A couple of poems on this subject in this volume, "Dryaden" and "Åkallan av hälsosamma vindar," are sufficiently idyllic in manner and positive in tone to mark no advance on his earlier treatments of the theme; but such gently negative things as "Requiem över ett minne" and "Saknads dagar" reveal something of a new note, and the intense lover's pathos of "Purpurfågeln" marks a complete turn about.

Here it is a purple bird ("purpurfågeln") that is the symbol of love, not the gracious, smiling, playful Eros of before. The very colour of the bird, with its artificial, Oriental associations, is suggestive of decadence, of those fateful subconscious longings that lead man and woman to destruction in a fiercely moving wave of passion. The poem itself fulfills the sinister promise of this symbolic title. It tells, in a sumptuously hectic strain reminiscent of Baudelaire, the story of a complete and utter love, and yet one that is heavy with the vapours of destruction because it can never be realized in life as it was dreamed in the first abandoned tendernesses of love's embrace. Already,

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It would seem reasonable to assume, however, in the light of the ultimate break between the lovers, that the course of the courtship itself was not without its negative aspects; and therefore, in case this attachment was a rather lengthy one, it is quite probable that the more realistic picture of love that we find in the pages of Blommande träd may have been primarily determined by this experience. And in any event, Österling's new conception of the relation between the sexes might easily have been determined by the general growth of his sex consciousness in these years. The poet himself, in a short autobiographical sketch that he penned for me in the spring of 1934, offers the essential outward facts regarding his broken engagement and indicates in general the severe disturbance that it caused in his life: "Den yttre och inre harmonien bröts på hösten 1911 i samband med en uppslagen förlovning. Hela året 1912 tillbragte jag på resor, mest i Italien, en uppriven och orolig period. På våren 1913 vände jag tillbaka till min bibliotekstjänstgöring, icke utan stark självövervinnelse. På hösten förelog Facklor i stormen."

indeed, even in that first embrace did the lovers feel vaguely that their love was such as hovered in the shadows of death rather than gamboled in the springtide of life --

De älskande, blott de din skepnad sågo,
de skälvde till, när i sin ömhets vår
en första natt de i din skugga lågo,
och mannen grät i kvinnans varma hår.
Och taket tycktes dem så lågt och ringa,
där fågeln gästat i en röd sekund,
de måste andlöst till altanen springa,
och som ett harpslag hördes mörkret klinga:
Vi ses väl än en gång, men då i dödens stund!

And in such an event, what should life be?

De klagade: Vad återstår oss sedan?
Ett stycke pilgrimsgång i smuts och snö,
ett rolöst trängselliv -- och hjärteledan,
när dag för dag vi se varandra dö.
Från känslans gråa höstar oss förskona,
från lyckans eftersmak av bittra bär,
nej, med en kyss vi livets skuld försona
och sänk till oss den unga dödens krona,
ty mogen är vår dag, fast än ej afton är!

And yet despite the sinister fate that hangs over such an abandoned love, both the man and the woman cry out the more for its realization --

Det långa livet! Låt dess olja brinna
för dem som mäta lusten med dess längd,
men hand i hand vi skrida, man och kvinna,
in genom porten till de dödas ängd.
Du ädla fågel Kärlek! Sänd ett eko
i gravens dunkla marmorlabyrint
till dina lyssnare, som aldrig sveko,
hur vilt och sällsamt dina strupljud skreko,
sjung över öde väg, där offren treva blint!

Se själens lönnrum, deras låsar brista,
upp flyga dörrarna för eldens storm,
och alla böner kvävas i den sista,
en bön om frihet från all stoftets form.
En enda flamma skapar livsmystären,
o låt i en ånyo svepas opp
till dödens vigsel under stjärnehären
de arma liv, som tyngda av begären
ha älskat utan tröst och levat utan hopp!

A couple of more stanzas in this manner, and then the poem is brought to a close by the poet's own words in justification of such love over against the moralizing of those who can never ex-

perience its pangs --

> Lätt nog för dem att brinna utan plåga,
> som känna dig till ryktet blott, som sägn,
> men dem du väljer, ve! I ljusan låga,
> o Eros, de förtäras i ditt hägn.
> De förgripa hellre sina öden
> med egenmäktig, livsmedveten hand
> och lyftas, bäddade i fjäderglöden,
> av purpurfågelns vingepar i döden,
> till morgonrodnans berg och eldens fosterland!

It is difficult for one to believe that such a love poem has been conceived merely on the basis of purely imaginative creation; at least some of its intensities must have been a part of the actual experienc of the poet who wrote these lines.

iv.

We have seen that the three volumes, Årets visor (1907), Bäckahästen (1909), and Blommande träd (1910), together form a group that represents Österling's complete arrival as landskaps-diktare, interpretor of the countryside of Skåne, its folk and its nature. Årets visor announces the arrival, and on the whole perhaps most adequately represents the Österling of these years; Bäckahästen is a delightful allegorical fantasy that marks no particular advances over Årets visor; while Blommande träd, though on the whole inferior to Årets visor, makes certain advances over his earlier volume, especially in the direction of a profounder philosophical interpretation of hembygden and landskapet. By the year 1910, then, it may be said that Österling has "found himself" poetically, and has produced three volumes of poetry in the manner that is to be his down through his entire poetical career. The volumes which follow, though in some cases superior to these earlier volumes, represent nothing essentially "new" in his poetic development; they reveal merely, as we should expect, a certain finer realization of the poetic ideals and a certain maturing in

the treatment of the themes that are already present in Årets visor and Blommande träd.

In the second chapter of our present study we have subjected Österling's miscellaneous critical reviews to a careful analysis for the purpose of discovering those formative influences which determined his break with fin de siècle aestheticism and his acceptance of new literary models which led him to the maturer realism of Årets visor and Blommande träd. It remains for us to examine in detail a general critical essay of first importance appearing in December of the year 1909, for in this essay we find the final formulation of those critical doctrines that lie at the basis of his arrival as landskapsdiktare.

"Anmärkningar till dagens lyrik" (1909) is a modest little manifesto, making no pretensions at a profound philosophical presentation of the subject, in which the poet attacks, chiefly by means of playful badinage and delicate satire, many of the tendencies of the day in lyric poetry, and incidentally suggests, more seriously, certain lines of approach to the whole problem which together might be said to represent his own poetic program at this time. Disarming as the playful modesty of tone in "Anmärkningar till dagens lyrik" may at first sight be, the importance that Österling attaches to it is suggested in the fact that it is reprinted prominently without revision in Människor och landskap, the collection of critical essays that the Swedish poet comes out with in 1910. Coming as it does three years after the triumph of Årets visor and immediately before the publication of Blommande träd, it has, despite its modest pretensions, the undeniable vitality and authority of actual poetic accomplishment behind it. The charges that Österling makes against "dagens lyrik" are essentially three: (1) the poetry of the present day is too far re-

moved from life and reality, (2) this evasion of life and reality as the subject matter of poetry is related closely to highly undesirable artificial ideals of style, and (3) present-day lyric poetry is too often characterized by a hyper-seriousness of tone and a false pathos. Besides these major objections to tendencies in contemporary lyric poetry, Österling makes a number of minor charges, all of them really corollaries to the major charges. Most important for our purposes, however, are the constructive suggestions that he offers incidentally as to just how the faults of the contemporaneous Swedish lyric poetry might be remedied.

Österling does not pause long over his first major charge: that the lyric poetry of his day is essentially "kammarpoesi" and too often has "intet med vårt liv att skaffa...."[42] He goes on quickly to the closely related stylistic problem. "Denna världsflykt...--" he writes, "denna skygghet för friluft och tillrättalagd verklighet sammanhänger med de artificiella stilideal, som nu stå i ropet."[43] The style of this lyric poetry is too strained, entirely too hyperbolical; it works itself up to heaven-storming universals over nothing at all.

> ... Det gäller icke att sjunga, därför att bröstet är öfverfullt, utan det gäller att öfverbjuda hvarandra i ett slags själslig finsnickerikonst, löfsågning i tunna tankar. Generationen vimlar af dessa Själens (stor bokstaf!) tågångare, som behädigt skrufva upp sig i en allmännelig begreppshimmel och pressa skuggupplefvelser i vädret för att de till hvarje pris må erhålla de öfvernaturliga proportioner, som anses litterärt erforderliga. Den mest episodiska, mest haltlösa erotism bäddar ogeneradt åt sig uppe bland stjärnorna för att där stråla öfver Skandinavien. Naturliga miljöer föraktas.
>
> Ex analogia universi! Det var redan gamle Bacons dröm, så skulle människan se och döma. Men kunde han efter döden tänkas kröna sin berömda encyklopedistiska bildning med ett eller annat prof på svensk-lyrisk universalitet, skulle han kanske tillråda vederbörande att i stället beflita sig om analogia hominis -- som en betydligt ofarligare illusion.[44]

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[42] Människor och landskap, pp. 216-17.

[43] Ibid., p. 217.

[44] Ibid., pp. 217-18.

It is clear that Österling's central charge against the hyperbolical manner, this facile transmutation of small poetic sentiments into universal generalizations, is that it is not natural -- "naturliga miljöer saknas." In the paragraphs which follow he goes on to indicate those elements in poetry that are essential in a complete return to the natural; and it is in these paragraphs that most of his constructive doctrines are to be found.

First of all, there must exist in the poet a more adequate emotional response to nature based directly upon an intimate observation of natural phenomena --

> Det är betecknande, att naturkänslan på de flesta håll är så kraftlös -- ty allt skall transponeras i en sinnebildlig glasvärld. Bleka bilder! Oftast ses naturen i kikare från stadsfönstret, och ingen af de yngre kan förnimma natur med den intimitet och den ömsinthet för detaljen, som förlänar exempelvis Gellerstedts sista böcker deras fina och susande charm. Det är sakligheten, som brister, ty lyrikern måste ju säga hvad slags fågel och hvad slags fisk -- eljest blir hans dikt hvarken fågel eller fisk. Oförmågan att friskt förnimma natur har i alla tider varit dåliga tecken, och medan vår svenska målarkonst årligen bjuder ny, monumental natursyn, står den svenska lyriken halfblind bak brillorna. Man vet ofta namn på de sällsammaste ädelstenar, där man icke har reda på de enklaste nordiska trädslag. Ack, de mångbesjungna pärlorna! Af dem har den svenska lyriken sannerligen mera än den ekonomiskt kan svara för -- men en glåmig själ blir icke fagrare därför att den pryder sig med chrysofraser, och en fantasi, som icke har annat att syssla med, hör bättre hemma bak juvelerardisken![45]

In the second place, such a sensitive response to natural phenomena should find a parallel in a like response to the simplest objects of everyday life immediately about us -- household utensils, farm implements, and so on.

> Nu menar jag icke, att det skall vara totalförbud för diktandet med juveler eller andra föremål, och när en stor svensk lyriker nyligen tog Stagnelius' skugga till vittne på den moderna diktens futtiga sysslande med exempelvis husgeråd, torde han ha öfverdrifvit faran. Det finns i själfva verket icke det ringaste hinder för att dikta med ännu värre saker än husgeråd -- Francis Jammes har skrifvit en hänförande dikt om sin matsal! -- och det vore i stället just önsk-

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[45] Ibid., p. 218.

> ligt, att tingen, de banala tingen, finge lefva klarare och rikare än förr i svensk lyrik. En fri genius skyggar icke för de torftigaste objekt, tvärtom känner han ofta en hemlig dragning just till det glanslösa, undanskymda och försmådda, till lifvets allra fattigaste stilleben. Den, som är något förtrogen med engelsk lyrik, skall särskildt hos The Lake-school finna en fantasi, som af de enklaste, landtliga realiteter skapat underverk af stämningsskönhet, ögon, som våga se och erkänna hvad de se. Där finns the quiet attitude of things -- hos Wordsworth främst, som också fick heta kälkborgare![46]

It is interesting to note here that it is two foreign poets, Francis Jammes and Wordsworth, to whom Österling refers as authoritative justifications of the use of commonplace objects as the proper subject matter for poetry. We have already examined the significance that each of these poets has had in Österling's poetic development. Swedish poetry, it should be noted, seems to suggest no striking parallels to these two foreign exponents of simplicity and the commonplace. Not even the contemporary hembygdsdiktning seems to satisfy Österling in this regard; its emphasis upon outmoded costumes and all that goes with them is to our Swedish critic apparently but another form of romantic exoticism.

> Yngre svensk vers har också ett misstänkt intresse för allt slags förklädnader, exotiska tillställningar, psykologiska maskerader, gärna med ett visst Androgynetycke öfver grannlåten. Kravet på mera eller mindre luxuöst inredt själslif går obetingadt före sanningskravet, och jag vet icke hvilka som äro värst, dessa hålögda cymbalister eller det Dalanationala handklaversfolket. Tillbaka till edra klädloger, I lyriska aktörer och intetsägare![47]

Whether Österling is here taking a sly dig directly at Karlfeldt and Fröding is not entirely clear, but that he is attempting to laugh out of court the wave of immature, second-rate hembygdsdiktning which swept over Swedish literature in the years immediately after the opening of the century as a consequence of the more satisfactory treatment of the same theme by Karlfeldt and Fröding seems sufficiently apparent.

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[46] Ibid., pp. 218-19. [47] Ibid., p. 219.

Not hembygdsdiktning in the restricted, romantic-antiquarian, "Dalanationala" manner is desirable, but rather a hembygdsdiktning, if it is to be called this, that remains close to the actual soil of today and treats man in his immediate and commonplace environment in an original, fresh, and vital sense. This is the third way in which Österling would attain to the "natural" in lyric poetry.

> Väl vore, om det... begynte söcknas i den svenska lyriken. Romantiken har visserligen vändt hem från det rosiga näktergalslandet, men den håller förskrämd till uppe i kyrktornen och vågar icke beträda marken. Därnere ligger hvardagen, och äfven den behöfver sin melodi, många människor gå och längta vid arbetet, och hos dem skall dikten lefva. Gråa, gråa stå husen i de svenska städernas vintetystnad, men det är dock våra hem. Eld kan slås äfven ur gråsten, och det är de små förhållandena, som kräfva den största kärleken. Dikten behöfver icke utkora det söndagsaktiga, ty den ger alltid själf helg, när den är äkta. Skulle den då icke kunna maka örat närmare hvardagen, skulle den icke under själfva arbetsbruset kunna utlyssna något af det den förr endast trodde sig kunna höra i de tystast blommande timmarna?[48]

Only once in recent years, Österling is forced to admit, has he come upon a Swedish work "där verkligen nordisk hvardag sjunger med sin obeskrifliga, fint slöjade timbre." This is in Fredrik Vetterlund's last volume of verse.

Österling's essay comes to a close with a plea for more of a simple, playful, understanding humour in the attitude of the poet toward life in place of the false pathos and overwhelming seriousness that too often characterizes contemporary Swedish verse.

> Ännu en punkt skall jag dröja vid. De flesta, som numera utgifva vers, präglas af ett tungt, men sirligt allvar. Med oändlig pietet teckna de sina respektive profiler, mungipan får icke ha skymten af ett leende. Självironi finns nog på sina håll, ehuru tämligen sällsynt och alltid väl dold. Och dock är ju lyriken icke alldeles förbjuden att le -- det finns till och med många riktigt vackra leenden ute i Europa, ungdomliga, själfulla, djupsinniga leenden! Dansken Sophus Claussen har ett sådant underfundigt och för-

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[48] Ibid., pp. 219-20.

> trollande leende, ett säreget och segerrikt hjärtas, Richard Dehmel ler som en hvit hafsbränning -- och några af de nyare fransmännen tillåta sig också att le midt i lyriken: Verlaine log ibland som en himmelsk septemberafton öfver Luxembourgparken. I dessa leende hjärnor blixtrar aningen om en ny tids munterhet, en med nya krafter verkande, radioaktiv lyrik och en ny världsfamning utan förbehåll:
>
> Det festlige Hjerte tør vove et Spil!
> og Smerten -- ja Smerten som ogsaa er til!
>
> Dessa män ha icke sagt sitt sista ord, och äfven den, som ställer sig skeptisk mot tanken på en radikal föryngring af den lyriska dikten, skall kanske våga profetera, att framtiden har något att lära af deras musik. Wagnerismen har ännu icke tagit död på Mozarts och Schuberts rytmer![49]

Österling is to modify something of the optimism of such prophecies later when a more profound experience of life and its sufferings has visited him, but he never rejects completely the attitude that he takes here as to the fundamental value of poetic humour as an interpretative approach to life.

> Lifvets ansikte kan också smutsas af tårar, konst är försoning, och ett leende kan stundom försona. Utan att höra till dem, som göra sig angeläget att med rödkindad ifver luka bort alla på vår lifsväg spirande Carduus-arter, tillåter jag mig ifågasätta äktheten af den misotiska (det är visst färskaste termen) grundstämning, som präglar en del utkommande lyrik. Det faller mig icke in att polemisera mot den stora, oläkliga sorgen -- den som går ut ur världen och upp i den eviga snön för att få frid -- men väl mot allt slags folk, som af ren modebekvämlighet följer parollen. Däraf kommer det sig, att generationens lyrik oftare biktar de unga årens litet gravitetiska storhetsvansinne än de unga årens daggiga lifstacksamhet.[50]

Our poet is the first one to admit his own youthful excesses in the vein of false pathos and the overserious in such volumes as Preludier, and thus frankly anticipates the reader's possible retort.

> Ofelbare herr lyriker! hör jag någon säga, är då allt väl beställt med hvad ni själf skrifvit?-- Långtifrån, stammar jag helt förvirrad, långtifrån! Men detta är heller icke enbart skrifvet pro arte et domo.
> Ingen vill drömma ljusare om den svenska lyrikens framtid än den som nedskrifvit dessa trista väderleksobservationer. Men kort sagdt: den feber hvaraf mycket i dagens lyriska produktion lider, stammar i många fall från den stag-

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[49] Ibid., pp. 220-21.

[50] Ibid., pp. 221-22.

nerade lifskänslans vatten. Och detta vatten borde som floder söka sig utlopp i hafvets och solens blånande värld![51]

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[51] Ibid., p. 222.